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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: priority themes: initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit

Preliminary assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

At the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995), Governments adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and identified the eradication of poverty, the achievement of full employment and the promotion of secure, stable and just societies as goals of the highest and most urgent priority. They opened a new chapter in the quest for a more harmonious and just society, through the adoption of the 10 commitments contained in the Declaration, related strategies and practical implementation policies.

In its resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly decided to hold a special session in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and to consider further actions and initiatives. In its resolution 52/25 of 16 November 1997, the Assembly established a Preparatory Committee to decide on the processes to be followed to achieve the purposes of the special session.

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At its organizational session (19–22 May 1998), the Preparatory Committee, in its decision 2, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its first substantive session a report on the implementation of the 10 commitments, including the three core issues, at the national, regional and international levels. The present report responds to that request, and is submitted to the Preparatory Committee through the Commission for Social Development.

In the context of its review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and in accordance with its multi-year programme of work and the agenda for its thirty-seventh session, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1998/226, the Commission for Social Development will consider in 1999 as one of its priority themes the theme "Initiation of the overall review of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit". A separate report entitled "Further initiatives for the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" (E/CN.5/1999/3) is also before the Commission under agenda item 3 (a) (ii).

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I. Introduction

1. Almost four years have passed since the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development,[1] a relatively short period to register dramatic changes in specific indicators of social progress, but a reasonable time-frame to observe changes in policy trends. About 110 countries have reported adopting measures related to the implementation of the Summit recommendations. Given the diversity of economic and political realities in the individual countries, a wide variety of actions have been taken. Measures adopted range from the preparation of new national strategies to administrative arrangements, such as the designation of focal points, and to the elaboration and implementation of specific policies and programmes.

2. There is inevitably some time lag between the adoption of new policies and the dissemination of relevant information, particularly with respect to statistical data. In addition, some policies take a long time to implement and mature, while others may have an immediate impact. Although certain economic indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP) growth and inflation rates, are readily available for almost all countries, social indicators, such as maternal mortality rates or the prevalence of malnutrition, are either not available in many countries or not updated very often. Thus, it is not always possible to have a comprehensive assessment of the impact of measures adopted concerning the well-being of affected populations. Some of the indicators presented in the present report, though based on information available as of early October 1998, reflect conditions that existed during the first half of the 1990s. More updated information will become available in time for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in the year 2000 for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. In this regard, it will be recalled that the Preparatory Committee for the special session has requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its second substantive session, in the year 2000, a comprehensive report assessing the overall level of implementation of the Summit, including the identification of constraints, successes, lessons learned and recommendations for further actions. Guidelines for national reporting were prepared and sent by the Secretariat to Governments in October 1998 to assist them in preparing their reviews.

3. Since the holding of the Summit in March 1995, the Secretary-General has reported annually on the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. Four reports have already been submitted to the Assembly on initiatives and activities undertaken by Governments and the international community on Summit implementation (A/50/670; A/51/348; A/52/305; and A/53/211); they focused mainly on measures adopted by the international community, particularly the United Nations system. The present report contains information on activities taken at the national, regional and international levels. It also attempts to identify the main trends in policy -making that would indicate progress towards the fulfilment of the agreed commitments. In addition, the report differs from its predecessors in that it aims to assess the implementation process according to the 10 commitments formulated at Copenhagen.

4. An analysis of those commitments reveals some overlapping among the measures to be adopted, given that the issues are clearly interlinked and multidisciplinary. Some reorganization of specific provisions identified by the Declaration was therefore necessary. Accordingly, all elements dealing with gender issues are discussed under commitment 5

[1] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I; for the Programme of Action of the Summit, see ibid., annex II.

on achieving equality and equity between men and women, although they also relate to other commitments. Issues related to social services are treated under commitment 6 on education and health. Official development assistance (ODA) and the external debt relief initiatives are included under commitment 9 on allocating resources for social development. Measures related to human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) are presented in commitment 6 on education and health.

5. The present report draws primarily on information available in the United Nations system, particularly in reports prepared by the regional commissions, the specialized agencies, the funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions and other intergovernmental institutions, such as the regional development banks and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Information furnished by Governments since the Summit has also been used.

II. Implementing the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development

6. The Copenhagen Declaration specifies actions by Governments at the national, regional and international level to fulfill the goals of the Summit, which were organized into 10 specific commitments. The present section of the report attempts to assess the current state of implementation of those commitments.

Commitment 1. Creation of an enabling environment

7. Heads of Governments agreed at the Summit that social development is inseparable from the cultural, economic, political and spiritual environment in which it takes place. They committed themselves to adopting a series of measures to enable people to achieve social progress. Those measures, once implemented, will facilitate the creation of an environment that is supportive of productive economic and social activities at all levels of society. They include legislative and judicial reforms to make national and international laws and regulations compatible with the principles of equity and full respect for human rights, human dignity and integrity, and also incorporate reforms to improve the governance of public institutions and systems so as to make them more accessible and responsive to the needs of all.

Creating a favourable national and international political and legal environment

8. The elaboration of a comprehensive legal framework and the prevalence of the rule of law are essential elements of institutional development, both as a condition for and expression of social progress. Of late, institutional development at the national level has been dominated by the expansion and deepening of democratization. Democratically elected Governments continue to increase in number. In 1974, there were only 39 countries with democratic regimes; today, the leadership of about 120 countries is chosen through open elections, and two thirds of the adult population in developing countries are eligible to participate in national elections. The shift towards a participatory political system has been particularly evident in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America, where the movement towards democracy began earlier, most countries have enhanced their mechanisms of political participation, with a stronger involvement of organizations of civil society.

9. Democratization has also involved the establishment of viable legal and political frameworks supportive of the objectives of social development, aiming at more just and equitable systems of representation, the setting of administrative structures accessible to all citizens, and the creation of a culture of justice, tolerance and peace. Democratization requires an adequate level of education of the population, relevant mechanisms for a wider access to knowledge, technology, information, a sound and accessible system of health services, and a societal environment encompassing sustainable economic progress and social development. In all those areas, organizations of civil society have been playing a vital role.

10. In many countries, representatives of civil society have been members of national Summit follow-up bodies, and have therefore participated in decision-making processes regarding strategies and programmes developed in compliance with the recommendations of the Summit. National progress reports submitted by Governments reflect a number of activities carried out by organizations of civil society. Delegations of some countries to the General Assembly, as well as the Commission for Social Development, have included representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in activities related to the follow-up to the Summit. At the international level, groups of non-governmental organizations have monitored the implementation of the Summit outcome. Some non-governmental organizations have taken the lead in convening regional meetings to evaluate progress, maintain the momentum achieved at Copenhagen and suggest new directions for the future.

11. In its vision of an enabling environment, the World Summit for Social Development reaffirmed the crucial importance of international peace and security for social progress and development, and committed itself to supporting efforts to settle international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

12. It is essential for social development that all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development as an integral part of fundamental human rights, be promoted and protected. During these last few years, major violations, including genocide, mass killing and torture, have caused immense suffering and tarnished the whole international community. The decision to create an International Criminal Court should not obscure the challenges that still remain. Although progress has continued in the ratification of human rights instruments by more States, much remains to be done to use fully the institutions established for the monitoring of the implementation of human rights. With regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the frequent falling of individuals and families below poverty lines represent a setback in the enjoyment of these rights.

13. A review of this aspect of the Summit commitment is beyond the scope of the present report. However, from the perspective of social development, it is worth noting that violence, human rights abuses and ethnic conflicts have led to a dramatic increase in internally displaced populations despite the continuous overall decline in the number of refugees since 1995. By the end of 1997, the refugee population was estimated at 12 million people, 3.5 million fewer than the 15.5 million in 1995. That decrease is due in part to the efforts made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to ensure secure repatriation, and to incidents of large-scale involuntary repatriation that took place in 1996. In 1997, about 900,000 refugees were repatriated, while the figure for 1996 was about 2 million. Nonetheless, refugees often return to countries with very fragile, unstable situations. In addition, about 30,000 refugees were resettled in third countries under

programmes sponsored by UNCHR in 1997. The world population of internally displaced people is currently estimated at 30 million. [2]

14. Millions of refugees continue to live in precarious conditions. The plight of refugees with special needs (women at risk, the elderly, children and adolescents, those with serious medical conditions) is even more perilous, considering the reluctance of many receiving countries to allow their resettlement. Moreover, most resettled refugees are in need of further assistance to re-integrate into their own country or in a new country, especially when they come from a different culture or ethnic background.

15. Social development is also threatened by the internationalization of organized crime operations, particularly those involving the production, trafficking and distribution of illicit drugs. Changes in patterns of consumption imply that drug addiction, associated in the past with socially marginalized groups, has now also become a growing problem within the better-off segments of societies, especially among the young. Drug cartels have demonstrated acute ingenuity in adapting to new opportunities, taking advantage of shifts in law enforcement initiatives, changes in social and economic conditions of countries, consumption patterns and national tastes, as well as developing new technological and production methods. As a result, there is a strong indication that both the supply of and the demand for illicit drugs is on the rise despite efforts to contain them.

16. The international anti-drug effort has in fact intensified in the second half of the current decade, parallelling the drug-control measures sanctioned by the multilateral conventions currently in force.[3] The United Nations development agencies, in cooperation with donor countries, have introduced alternative (to illicit drug crops) development programmes in the areas of cultivation of coca leaf and opium poppy in several Asian and Latin American countries. Significant success has been achieved in some cases.[4] However, considering the enormous profits generated by the drug trade and the growing global demand for drugs, additional efforts and resources are necessary. In 1998, a special session of the General Assembly was devoted to the problem of drugs and crime, and a global strategy was adopted to control drugs, reduce demand for narcotics and eradicate the illicit cultivation of opium, coca and other narcotic crops over the next 10 years.

Creating a favourable national and international economic environment

17. Commitment 1 also calls for the creation of an enabling economic environment aimed at promoting more equitable access for all to income, resources and social services. Countries committed themselves to increasing popular participation in social and economic policies and promoting open and free markets, economic stability and long-term investment. Economic and social goals were to be harmonized to allow productive participation by all in the economy and in society. National efforts are to be supported by an enabling

[2] Figures refer to the refugee population under the concern of UNHCR and thus do not include the 3.2 million Palestinians who are covered under a separate mandate by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (based on data at http://www.unhcr.ch/un&ref/numbers/numbers.htm, accessed on 13 October 1998).

[3] The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 520, No. 7515; the 1972 Protocol Amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, ibid., vol. 976, No. 14152, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, ibid., vol. 1019, No. 14956; and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, *Official Records of the United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Vienna, 25 November–20 December 1988*, vol. 1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.X.1.5).

[4] According to data on the eradication of illicit drug crops and alternative development, accessed at http://www.undcp.org/undcp/gass/info2.htm on 13 October 1998.

international environment through enhancing policy coordination, cooperation and participation.

18. After the Summit, world trade continued to expand at robust rates and developed market economies emerged from the recession of the early 1990s with modest but real rates of growth. Such economic growth remained strong in most developing countries despite the financial crisis in Latin America, and for the first time in decades the African region recorded a gain in average per capita income. Yet even before the financial crisis emerged in Asia and then in Russia, it was clear that the growth rates achieved were far from sufficient to make a strong dent in poverty levels. The income gap among certain groups of countries was increasing rather than narrowing. With public budgets coming under reasonable control and inflation pressures subsiding, many commentators believed that growth brought about by expanding markets would take care of such problems as persistent unemployment and poverty.[5]

19. This belief was shaken by the recent financial crisis in Asia. Private capital flew from the affected regions. Currencies of the most affected countries lost considerable purchasing power. Credit was no longer available. Local banking systems became insolvent. Firms went into bankruptcy and interest rates skyrocketed. The crisis quickly spread to other countries through trade and financial links. One of the results was that forecasts of world output growth for 1998 and 1999 have been revised downwards.[6]

20. As GDP estimates are being revised, it has become clear that the social impact of the crisis has been enormous. Unemployment has increased sharply in a region where labour shortages had been recently registered in some countries. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recently estimated that the financial crisis in Asia increased the number of the unemployed by well over 10 million in 1998. Financial crises can at a stroke wipe out gains from decades of steady employment growth. In addition, it is difficult for countries at all levels of development to maintain high employment in the context of a low rate of growth in the global economy. In fact, the unemployment situation is critical in many regions, independently of the negative impact of the Asian crisis. Urban unemployment rates in Africa, for instance, have been estimated to average 20 per cent and are projected to reach 30 per cent by the year 2000. Moreover, in many countries real wages have declined because of greater unemployment, the effects of currency devaluations and higher food prices. Wage gaps have widened in several countries, causing increasing income inequality, particularly in countries where fiscal mechanisms do not counterbalance this negative trend. Informal employment is on the rise, but at a much lower level of earnings. There are many cases, notably in the former USSR of individuals, families and social groups regressing into precarious forms of subsistence. In the Russian Federation, for example, the number of people in poverty is estimated at 44 million. With unemployment, poverty has been on the increase in those regions, as well as in a number of affluent economies. Poverty is increasing dramatically in a number of South-East Asian countries, where very impressive results in combating poverty had been registered in the times of robust growth and "economic miracle".

21. In countries affected by the crisis, lower household incomes have made it more difficult for families to send their children to school. Drop-out rates are increasing. The

[5] *World Economic and Social Survey 1998* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E. 98.II.C.1).

[6] The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat revised its initial forecast of world output growth for 1998 from 3 per cent in December 1997 to 2.5 per cent in July 1998, estimating at the end of 1998 that the world output growth was 1.7 per cent and forecasting 2 per cent growth for 1999 (see E/1998/INF/1 and *World Economic and Social Survey 1998*).

number of people in need of social protection is expanding, yet countries do not have the institutional infrastructure in place to deal with the situation. Increased pressure is being placed upon informal social protection mechanisms, which are also subject to the deteriorating economic conditions and hardly able to provide viable minimum sustenance.

22. Economic distress also leads to pressures on social cohesion as tensions among social or ethnic groups emerge. Another source of concern is the situation of migrant workers and refugees. The Asian countries, victims of the crisis, hosted about 6.5 million migrant workers by mid-1997, many of them with irregular legal status.[7] With unemployment rising, the crackdown on illegal immigrants has intensified, at the same time as the reasons for leaving their countries of origin have become widespread.

23. To improve the ability of the international community to prevent and respond better to future financial crises, calls for strengthening the "architecture" of the global financial system were put forward by the Ministers of Finance of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries at their meeting at Birmingham, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in May 1998. At the same time, an indication of changes in perceptions of what should constitute sound and desirable macroeconomic policies has emerged. It is also felt in some circles that deregulation and liberalization might have gone too fast, and too far and that the emphasis on price stability has done little to reduce chronic unemployment and poverty or to increase opportunities for the excluded. The nascent shift in sentiment may represent the first seeds of a bolder strategy to place people at the centre of development, as called for by the Summit, and to direct the economic system to meet human needs more effectively.

24. The past few years have witnessed increasing integration of the world economies and a parallel convergence of policies pursued by Governments worldwide. Developed countries, as well as most developing and transition economies, have adopted measures aimed at increasing the stability of their economies through tight fiscal and monetary controls, thus reducing major macroeconomic imbalances. In their search for a more efficient allocation of resources through market mechanisms, many Governments have also removed impediments to private initiatives, while simultaneously encouraging foreign investment, through privatization, deregulation and liberalization of their economies. While it is unavoidable and useful to open economies to exchanges and influences of various types, the speed, modalities and extent of the integration into an increasingly globalized world economy have had a critical importance and significance.

25. Governments have embarked on fiscal and administrative reforms aimed at producing a more efficient State apparatus. In several countries, decentralization of central government functions and revenues has taken place, with local governments and communities becoming increasingly involved in the administration of local affairs. However, in many cases administrative reforms have not yet produced a more transparent public accounts system or made a significant impact on improving governance or reducing corruption in some countries. In addition, efforts to improve the democratic debate about revenue allocation have been quite limited.

26. An enabling international economic environment requires increased access to global markets. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations has led to a substantial liberalization of international trade, as average tariff rates have dropped considerably in developed, developing and transition economy countries. However, there

[7] See ILO, "The social impact of the Asian financial crisis", study prepared by the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 1998.

are still markets, some in wealthy countries, whose products are protected by very high tariff rates, thus limiting exporters' access.

27. As tariff barriers decrease, greater use is being made of non-trade barriers, particularly anti-dumping and countervailing measures. Less transparent forms of intervention are also emerging, such as regulations pertaining to health and safety standards (see A/53/301). Excessive documentation requirements and procedural delays have acted as de facto barriers to expanded trade. But, on balance, the international trade environment has become more open since 1995. A recent report noted that developed countries made improvements in their Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) schemes in favour of the least developed countries, thus enhancing trade opportunities for this group of nations. Developing countries have also taken measures to promote the integration of least development countries, such as increasing membership in regional trading arrangements or deepening preferential treatment (see A/52/279). Such actions have a potential positive impact on increasing the access of least developed countries to their markets and better integrating these countries into the world economy.

Commitment 2. Eradication of poverty

28. Commitment 2 calls for decisive national action and international cooperation to eradicate poverty as "an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind". To that end, countries committed themselves to formulating and/or strengthening national policies to reduce overall poverty and inequality, as well as to eradicating absolute poverty. This commitment also includes the need to address the root causes of poverty and to take measures to satisfy basic needs for all, including access to productive assets. At the international level, the international community and organizations, including the financial institutions, would assist countries in fulfilling this commitment.

29. Assessment of progress in the implementation of commitment 2 draws heavily on a recent report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), entitled *Overcoming Human Poverty*.[8] According to the UNDP study, which reports on a survey conducted on 130 countries, 78 have either adopted plans for poverty reduction or introduced an explicit component on poverty reduction within their national planning framework. However, only 38 countries have set targets for poverty reduction. A further 40 countries are in the process of developing plans and strategies for poverty reduction. Most of those plans and strategies contain such elements as increased access to basic services and the promotion of employment opportunities. Thus, there has been some progress at the national level to plan for poverty reduction. However, half of the countries surveyed did not have any specific plan in place, and those with plans have yet to translate them into action.

30. In the area of international cooperation, initiatives have also been launched to reduce poverty. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) strategy "Shaping the twenty-first century" establishes specific targets for extreme income poverty reduction and improvements in human well-being, several of which reflect targets adopted by the Summit. Another initiative is the Tokyo Agenda for Action adopted at the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held in October 1998. The primary theme of the Tokyo Agenda is poverty reduction. It aims to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in the continent by at least half by the year 2015. The Agenda also specifies guidelines for African countries and their development partners to achieve this goal.

[8] UNDP Poverty Report 1998 (United Nations publication, Sales No. 99.III.B.2).

31. Several countries had formulated anti-poverty programmes prior to the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration. Measures adopted by countries in their fight against poverty include rural works programmes, including food for works, public works and other forms of subsidized employment creation schemes, which allow the poor to be gainfully employed and lead productive lives. Aside from employment creation schemes, basic education, rural health and special projects for the disabled have also been developed and integrated into the broader strategy of poverty alleviation.

32. The establishment of funds for social investment/development has also been a typical response to poverty problems aiming to provide a safety net for those negatively affected by macroeconomic stabilization policies and not covered by formal social security arrangements. Social funds, however, have not been able to cope with the problem of growing poverty in countries under structural adjustment. In several instances, the percentage of the population adversely affected by the economic reforms was too large in comparison with the funds available for providing a safety net. While these funds did create employment, most of them had a limited impact given the magnitude of existing unemployment. In many cases, the social fund initiatives bypassed the poorest of the poor, thus reaching the better organized sectors of the population, which were able to voice their concerns more forcefully.

33. In the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region, for instance, countries have been following a mix of policies to combat poverty. These include macroeconomic policies, sectoral programmes and social policies. According to ESCAP, however, macroeconomic policies were designed in many countries of the region, primarily to address stabilization and growth concerns, with poverty to be reduced through trickle-down effects. Sectoral policies also emphasized growth aspects but neglected their impact on the poor. The allocation of fiscal resources continues to be concentrated in urban areas and for non-agriculture purposes, while the majority of the poor in the region live in rural areas and work in agriculture (similar biases exists in other developing regions). As a result, the positive impacts of specific poverty alleviation programmes and other social policies has not been maximized. Productive linkages among policies still need to be better organized.[9]

34. In general, poverty reduction initiatives have focused too narrowly on social sectors, treating poverty as a residual issue. Since the Summit, there has been a qualitative change in the approaches countries use to address poverty. Countries now recognize that poverty must be tackled with a broad range of policies and programmes. Governments increasingly acknowledge the need to move beyond ideas of social welfare and safety nets in order to reduce poverty more effectively. There is a need to better integrate macroeconomic policies, promoting growth and stability with institutional changes, increasing the access of the poor to productive services, such as land and credit, and developing micro level policies that aim to empower the poor and achieve greater participation.

35. Access to micro-financing is one of the strategies pursued to achieve economic empowerment of the poor, particularly for women. At present, approximately 10 million people around the world are reached through arrangements of micro-credit. At the Micro-Credit Summit, held at Washington, D.C., in 1997, participants pledged that by the year 2005 that number would reach 100 million.

36. In most countries of the world, access to technology, knowledge and information remains confined to a small fraction of the urban population. In industrialized countries,

[9] According to ESCAP data on the social development situation and prospects of Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century, accessed at http://www.unescap.org/sps/paper1a.htm on 18 November 1998.

on the contrary, access has been continuously widening as a result of rapid proliferation of information technology and the relatively high average level of educational attainment of the population. Only a few developing countries have reached a comparable level in this respect. Efforts, nonetheless, have been undertaken in rural areas to diffuse technological knowledge through training of small producers and farmers, provided within micro-entrepreneurial development projects.

37. Nevertheless, current poverty eradication policies still suffer from design, as well as the absence of continuous monitoring and evaluation. Participation by the poor has not yet reached satisfactory levels. Many of the measures adopted miss those most in need. Programmes often do not cover the poorest of the poor living in communities far away from urban centres that suffer from inadequate infrastructure as well as limited communication. Even when development activities are accessible to the poorest segment of the population, they may not be able to participate in them through lack of basic skills. Alternatively, they may be reluctant to involve themselves in projects that include self-employment or entrepreneurial activity. In other instances, the poorest may be perceived by some as unreliable or not creditworthy, a potential liability for community activities. They therefore become excluded. As a result, the ones most likely to benefit from poverty programmes are those who are not quite so poor but rather already have some basic capabilities and skills. Success, however, has been achieved in targeting the most vulnerable groups and in involving them in the selection and execution of poverty eradication projects in some countries.

38. In developed countries, poverty has been addressed through a wide range of social security and social assistance programmes, as well as specifically targeted interventions. Family support programmes play an important role in preventing child poverty. Responding to changes in the family structure and to the size of single-parent families, many developed countries have introduced specific programmes to prevent such families from falling into poverty traps. They combine cash allowances, tax credits, child-care services, training and work incentives to facilitate the transition of single parents back into employment.

39. Commitment 2 also refers to the provision of basic services for all. Food is perhaps the most basic need. While significant progress has been made in world food security during the past decades, 20 per cent of the population in developing countries were classified as hungry in 1990–1992, compared with 35 per cent two decades earlier. The absolute number of people with inadequate access to food declined only slightly from 920 million in 1969–1971 to 840 million in 1990–1992. That figure does not include the hungry in the developed countries and the economies in transition. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the number of chronically hungry people in the world is rising, and the Asian financial crisis threatens to frustrate attempts to ease the suffering. It estimated that the number of severely undernourished people in the developing countries was 828 million in the 1994–1996 period. Some 190 million children are underweight, while 230 million are stunted (low height per age). More than half of all child deaths in developing countries is associated with nutritional problems.[10]

40. Although food security has improved globally, a significant proportion of the world population is still food insecure. Even when food security at the national level is adequate, this does not necessarily resolve the problem of food security at the household level. Access to food or the household ability to obtain food is critical to ensuring food security. In its report on progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, the

[10] See "Food security and nutrition", technical background paper presented at the World Food Summit, Rome, 13–17 November 1996.

Committee on World Food Security stated that several developing countries have established short-term mechanisms to increase access to food. Food-for-work programmes, common in many countries, are supplemented by school-feeding programmes, direct distribution of food or cash for those unable to participate in work schemes and other similar measures.[11] Within the United Nations system, FAO, among other initiatives, sponsors the Special Programme for Food Security, which aims to help low-income food-deficient countries to improve their food security through fast growth in agricultural output, focusing particularly on small farmers. Nonetheless, additional policies that increase the access of vulnerable households to food are still required. Parallel action in health and education is also vital.

41. Adequate shelter is another basic need. Poor quality housing continues to be a major problem for most countries. More than a billion people in developing countries lack adequate shelter. Homelessness has become a growing problem in some developed countries as well. Many countries have developed national plans of action to implement the Habitat Agenda [12] adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996. In developing countries, local government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector are actively involved in the development of housing and provision of services. Focus is given to improving water and sanitation infrastructure and to environmental improvements, through provision of green space, disaster prevention etc. More efficient and less polluting transportation systems are particularly relevant to Latin American countries.

42. Many countries have undertaken policy measures aimed at promoting the use of low-cost construction materials, developing local designs and construction technology, and encouraging private-public cooperation for housing construction. In developed countries, the focus is shifting to the development of sustainable cities and the use of land for nature conservation. In economies in transition, many cities face the task of urban restructuring, pollution control and environmental rehabilitation under severe fiscal constraints. The provision of other basic services, such as health, education and safe water, are discussed below.

43. Little progress has been achieved to ensure that all people have adequate social and economic protection. The coverage of formal social security programmes remains inadequate in developing countries. Some did make efforts to include occupational groups that were previously excluded, such as agricultural and domestic workers, the self-employed or those working in the informal sector, but usually on a non-mandatory basis and without much success. In very few developing countries did coverage levels reach those currently enjoyed by the industrialized countries. In some other countries, coverage can be indeed rather low and reaches only a few privileged ones working in the public sector.

44. The structural transformation that is taking place in several developing and transition economies, coupled with the potential financial bankruptcy of social security funds in some countries (particularly in Latin America and Eastern Europe) have led to a series of reforms in their social security programmes. These reforms increasingly rely on private provision of services, and are characterized by a parallel decline of the relative importance of social insurance mechanisms, a replacement of benefit-determined systems by contribution-determined ones, and a more extensive use of targeted and means-tested benefits (as opposed to universal ones).

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[11] See FAO Committee on World Food Security, report on progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action (CFS:98/3).

[12] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, 3–14 June 1996* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.6), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

45. While such measures may address issues of financial sustainability of formal social security and social assistance programmes, it is not clear whether they represent efficient responses to ensure the provision of adequate protection against poverty. In the case of old-age pensions, for instance, the new schemes count on a substantially lower level of guarantee of benefits from the State, and increasingly depend on the performance of capital markets and the individual's ability to work and participate in the labour market. As social security systems are reformed, some negative results are already being experienced. In the economies in transition, lower benefits have been translated into an increase in poverty among pensioners, young couples with children, families with a large number of children and people with disabilities.

46. The World Summit for Social Development provided the United Nations system with a major impetus and renewed commitment to alleviate the scourge of poverty, hunger and disease. Among the United Nations funds and programmes, the UNDP mission is the achievement of sustainable human development, with poverty eradication as an overriding priority. UNDP addresses poverty as a denial of human rights, a refusal of various choices and opportunities basic to human development. Between 1994 and 1997, UNDP reached more than 3.6 million people, with projects that included nutritional supplements for pre-school children, job training for youth and improvements in housing and sanitation. Those programmes have also succeeded in forging new alliances between government and civil society as a way of reaching the poorest and the most vulnerable. The Secretary-General has recently submitted to the General Assembly an updated review of United Nations system activities on poverty eradication (A/53/329).

47. Poverty eradication is the main objective of the World Bank's operational activities. The Bank promotes a strategy of rapid labour- intensive growth, investment in human capital (particularly health and education) and safety nets for those excluded or unable to participate in the growth process. The Bank's strategy for poverty eradication is an evolving one. Recently, the Bank has promoted a more participatory approach to involve local people in the policy dialogue. Currently, the Bank acknowledges the importance of "social capital" for poverty eradication, thus highlighting the relevance of social cohesion and institutions for social development.

Commitment 3. Promotion of full employment

48. Commitment 3 aims at the promotion of full and productive employment. Countries agreed to pursue strategies in which the promotion of employment and the reduction of unemployment are central to national policy-making. At the international level, Governments agreed to foster international cooperation in macroeconomic policies in order to promote sustained economic growth and job creation.

49. With some significant exceptions, the overall picture shows that the employment situation worldwide has not improved since the adoption of commitment 3. The intervening period has not been long enough for policy changes induced by that commitment to manifest themselves. Moreover, employment trends are heavily influenced by the global economic environment. Recent developments have been negative on this score. The Asian financial crisis has been a major factor behind the recent overall deterioration in the world employment situation. The overall lack of progress towards the goal of full employment cannot, therefore, necessarily be taken as an indication of a failure to implement the commitment on employment.

50. There have been several encouraging indications that the degree of commitment to the employment objective has been maintained since the Summit. One indicator has been the number of intergovernmental conferences that have been devoted to the employment issue. Prominent among these have been the International Labour Conference of 1996, which adopted conclusions concerning the achievement of full employment in a global context, the three Group of Seven conferences on employment held at Lille in April 1996, at Kobe in November 1997 and in London in 1998, and the European Union's job summit held in Luxembourg in November 1997. A particularly relevant development was the adoption by the International Labour Conference in June 1998 of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up. This is a significant step towards ensuring quality jobs and safeguarding the basic rights and interests of workers.

51. It is worth noting that the Group of Seven conferences involved the participation of ministers responsible for finance or economic affairs alongside those responsible for employment and labour policies. This is a welcome development, in that it contributes to increasing the weight given to the employment objective in the formulation of macroeconomic policies. All these conferences adopted conclusions which committed participating countries to undertaking action to improve overall employment conditions, as well as to tackling the problems of particular groups in the labour market. In the case of the European Union meeting, there was a particularly strong outcome in the form of the adoption of a comprehensive European employment strategy, which provides for the adoption of annual policy guidelines and national action plans for employment.

52. There have also been signs of greater attention to the employment objective at the national level. Several countries have held "job summits" or high-level national meetings devoted to the discussion of employment problems and the mobilization of action to improve employment conditions. These meetings have been generally broad-based and involved the participation of government agencies as well as workers' and employers' organizations. Other indicators that greater attention is being paid to the employment situation have included the issuance of policy statements or national action plans on employment. For instance, a recent statement entitled "The new European way", issued by the Public Employment Service of the Council of the European Communities (Economic and Financial Affairs), cites as a central policy objective the reconstruction of a full employment society, a society in which there are job opportunities for all citizens. While the statement reaffirms the need for macroeconomic policies that create stability and are conducive to sustainable expansion, it also notes that budgetary, monetary, social, income and environment policies have to be seen together in a dialogue.

53. Another discernible policy change in the industrialized countries since the Summit is the greater emphasis given to active labour market measures over passive income support. In the European Union, the 1998 and 1999 employment guidelines emphasize the importance of improving employability, especially of youth. The 1999 guidelines set a target that within a maximum of four years (but which may be longer in countries with particularly high unemployment) every unemployed young person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure. In addition, unemployed adults are also to be offered a fresh start before reaching 12 months of unemployment by one of the above measures. The guidelines also state that these measures are to be supported by the review and redesign of tax and benefit systems in order to provide real incentives for unemployed or inactive people to seek work or take up training opportunities.

54. In individual member States of the European Union, new programmes have been introduced, such as the "New deal" in the United Kingdom, which includes a six-month

subsidy to employers hiring unemployed youth. France adopted a programme to create 350,000 new jobs for youth in the public and para-public sectors over a period of five years. Similarly, in the United States of America, the 1996 Welfare Reform Act has tightened eligibility conditions for passive benefits and aims to bring about a shift from welfare to work. This increased emphasis on active measures has been motivated by a growing concern over the problem of social exclusion that has been particularly severe for low-skilled new entrants to the labour market and the long-term unemployed. Raising the employability of these groups through training and work experience is seen as the key means of integrating them into the labour market. It is too early to rigorously assess the results of some of these policies.

55. Another policy shift since the Summit has been the renewed recent attempt in some countries to increase employment through mandated cuts in working hours. Such measures are not the panacea that some commentators of work-sharing claim them to be. But the available empirical evidence on the issue does suggest that they can make a positive contribution to employment creation, if accompanied by the right supporting measures. The latter include the alignment of hourly wage rates to productivity, the reduction of skill mismatches between the employed and the unemployed, and the achievement of an agreement on more flexible working-time arrangements in order to use existing capital stock more intensively.

56. It is difficult to single out similar salient policy shifts in developing countries because they constitute a large and heterogeneous group. The required information is also less readily available. What can be said in broad terms is that trade liberalization and policies to attract foreign direct investment are being implemented in a growing number of countries. More countries have also implemented financial liberalization. These measures should, in principle, favour higher growth in output and employment. However, as the Asian crisis has demonstrated, there are also inherent risks. It is therefore important to develop sound and well regulated financial systems before embarking on financial liberalization. The liberalization process also needs to be accompanied by policies to facilitate labour redeployment and provide adequate social protection.

57. Several international organizations have been active in promoting the implementation of commitment 3 and providing technical assistance to that end. A major initiative was the work of an Inter-Agency Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihood set up by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which defined a framework for cooperative inter-agency action at the country level on employment issues. The lead agency on employment promotion, the ILO, has also implemented a number of steps towards the fulfilment of commitment 3, including the holding of the International Labour Conference discussion on employment in 1996; the setting up of a system of country employment policy reviews that analyses employment policies and organizes tripartite discussions of them at the national level; and the organization of a series of regional consultations on the follow-up to commitment 3 in early 1999 that will culminate in a high-level global consultation towards the end of 1999.

Commitment 4. Promotion of social integration

58. Social and economic advancement of societies depends on cooperation among its members. This, in turn, is shaped by and depends upon the existing institutional system. In a just society, the institutional system induces cooperative patterns of group behaviour, while in others it leads to exclusionary practices. The Summit viewed institutionalized inequalities as impediments to social participation — and, hence to social integration and

solidarity — because of their effect on the distribution of opportunities and the resulting impact on market outcomes. In this context, the promotion of social integration entails the elimination of existing inequalities in fundamental rights and freedoms, and the creation of an institutional framework at the national and international levels that is conducive to participation and cooperation.

59. Many countries have ratified international human rights treaties and protocols, and have enacted or made amendments to laws and regulations. As of January 1998, there were a total of 1,016 ratifications or accessions to international human rights treaties, an increase of almost 28 per cent since the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. The overall progress in this area, however, has been uneven. The level of ratification varies from treaty to treaty. Thus, about three quarters of the Member States of the United Nations have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (respectively, 137 and 140 countries). The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination now has 150 State signatories. Less progress has been observed in relation to the ratification of both the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (30 States) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (9 States) (See E/CN.4/1998/104).

60. At the national level, the process of incorporation of human rights principles in domestic law continues to deepen. Nonetheless, it is far from being complete in a large number of countries. The majority of United Nations Member States have opted for a selective approach to international human rights instruments to avoid a possible conflict between national and international norms. Difficulties persist in enforcing compliance with human rights principles. The reasons range from silent resistance of social groups with vested interests in discriminatory practices to the lack of institutional and administrative capacity and financial resources for implementing necessary reforms. As a result, human rights have been either ignored or recognized on a limited scale, predominantly in urban areas and relating to those segments of the population engaged in formal activities.

61. Observance and promotion of human rights have been influenced to some extent by the interplay of domestic sociopolitical and economic factors. Thus, the accent on promoting and ensuring civil and political rights in countries in transition has an explanation in the overall nature of systemic transformation taking place in this group of countries and in the collective desire to build up democratic societies. In many sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries, the need to further the democratization process has been manifested in renewing attention to civil and political rights and pursuing changes in existing political arrangements. Low- income developing countries, in turn, have been preoccupied with issues of economic and social rights due to persisting mass poverty. Efforts to promote these rights have included measures to improve the access of the poor and disadvantaged groups, including women, to basic public services, formal credit, employment, land and other assets through changes in legislation, including land-titling and family law, or the extension of corporate and labour regulation to informal activities. Countries that experienced prolonged periods of domestic violence or had significant ethnic minorities have undertaken institutional reforms to build up an institutional framework for political and cultural diversity, which widens opportunities for minorities.

62. Some countries have incorporated human rights components in their formal educational and training setting. Public information campaigns include holding of special commemorative events, dissemination of materials and international treaties on human rights, production of television and film festivals. Other approaches include the promotion of community work. Comprehensive plans of action for the rights of women, including a

broad education component, have been developed in some countries. Increasing priority is given to promoting values of tolerance and diversity.

63. The collective pooling of risk of income loss due to sickness, unemployment, disability, death of breadwinner, old age etc. has proved to be effective in ensuring social solidarity. That notion, however, has recently been challenged on financial grounds, particularly in developed countries, as new social and economic circumstances have unfolded. The concept of collective responsibility through social insurance mechanisms has undergone a radical transformation. Collective responsibility is currently perceived by some as the promotion of equality of opportunity and the provision of a supportive environment for individual participation and an enhancement of well-being. In developed countries, access to social insurance programmes has been restricted as eligibility is tightened up and benefits reduced. As entitlements are cut but adverse risks persist, social protection — once benefits under social security programmes are exhausted or unavailable — is restricted to social assistance programmes. The latter usually makes use of targeting mechanisms and incentives to reduce dependency. In the former socialist countries, universal elements of the social security system, such as universal family benefits, guaranteed job security, free public health services, have been revoked or are undergoing major changes.

64. Reforms in social assistance programmes in industrialized countries, on the other hand, have aimed to address the problem of social exclusion, as discussed above under commitment 3. These programmes are increasingly being used as a means to promote integration and participation of vulnerable groups and the excluded[13]. In addition, in some countries social cohesion is promoted through social programmes and progressive taxation arrangements which favour low-income groups.

65. Despite much attention given to the problems of vulnerable groups over the past two decades, only a few countries have been systematic in addressing the problems of individuals with disabilities, migrants, indigenous population, unemployed youth and some other socially excluded groups. The needs of specific socially excluded groups have been met to a varying degree. Thus, many OECD countries have employed programmes for integrating people with disabilities. In the Nordic countries, for example, the disabled have been provided with vocational training and education services suited to their needs, as well as with employment placement services. Some countries have offered incentives to employers to encourage the hiring the disabled. However, in the majority of developing countries, people with disabilities have remained excluded and rely on the support of their families and communities.

66. With growing levels of international migration, the rights of immigrants and migrant workers and their protection and integration have become prominent in the domestic and international political debate. Some European countries, in the face of the increasing presence of foreign-born people and several generations of migrants, have been trying to work out an effective formula for their integration. Integration policies vary across countries.

67. The cultural integration of immigrants and migrant workers has been more actively pursued. All countries have opened their schools to immigrant children. Mother-tongue afternoon schools and/or obligatory integration courses for foreign-born adults have been set up to ease the integration of foreign-born adults into the host country. Integration of the second generation of migrants into occupational training systems has been vigorously sought in some industrialized countries. On the other hand, in the area of social protection of recent

[13] David W. Kalisch et al, *Social and Health Policies in OECD Countries: A Survey of Current Programmes and Recent Developments*, OECD Occasional Papers, No. 33 (Paris, 1998).

immigrants and new migrants, a prevailing trend has been to restrict their access to welfare programmes.

68. The importance of family values in ensuring a proper socialization of children in society is recognized everywhere. However, families have been under an enormous stress. Rural families in Africa, Latin America and Asia have had to cope with the consequences of migration of males to urban areas and abroad, declining commodity prices, droughts and ethnic and communal wars. Rural families that migrated to urban areas have had to find a way to survive in a new environment, relying only on their own labour force. Consequently, the use of child labour, trafficking in children and women, as well as child and female prostitution, have been prevalent on a growing scale in countries experiencing a rapid societal change or mass impoverishment. In developed countries, families are also not free of distress either. High rates of unemployment have been translated into increased divorce rates and a proliferation of single-parent families, and consequently into child poverty and juvenile social deviance. Many studies have noted a growing incidence of drug addiction and alcoholism among children and youth in developing as well as industrialized countries.

69. The problem of social marginalization of youth has been gaining public attention in many countries. Young people experience significant difficulties in entering the labour market, and youth unemployment rates are greater than those of adults. Within this group, the employment situation is much worse for young women and the disabled. Such exclusion of young people from productive roles in the world of work jeopardizes their productive potential and therefore employment opportunities. As the experience of many countries has demonstrated, high levels of youth unemployment can also lead to alienation from society and democratic political processes, giving rise to crime, drug abuse and vandalism, and in extreme cases to social unrest and conflict.

70. Industrialized countries have adopted several initiatives to address their concerns with the youth situation. For example, the Kobe employment conference held in November 1997 called for special measures to promote youth employment, including the provision of work experience both at school and outside the school curriculum, access to career information, counselling to build up clearer occupational consciousness, effective job placement and vocational training. The European Commission adopted 1998 guidelines for employment policy, which, *inter alia*, state that member States will ensure that every unemployed young person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure.[14]

71. Developing countries, at both national and regional levels, have launched youth employment promotion programmes and projects. The Organization of American States (OAS), for example, has initiated youth development projects designed to help young people to develop the skills, attitudes and resources that they need to become successful entrepreneurs or to succeed in the labour market. An example of the OAS projects is the multinational Young American Business Trust, which aims to promote micro-enterprise development, business skills training and support services for young people throughout the Caribbean and the Americas.

72. Drug abuse among young people constitutes another growing concern in many countries. At the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, 8–12 August 1998), many speakers, including representatives of youth organizations, called for more energetic national and international actions to prevent and reduce drug addiction among young people.

[14] See ILO, report on youth and employment prepared for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, Lisbon, 8–12 August 1998 (WCMRY/1998/9).

73. At the other extreme of the age spectrum, older persons are also victims of exclusion, marginalization and abuse. Intergenerational relations have been a matter of concern for many societies across the world. A combination of demographic, technological and societal trends has constrained the ability of families, communities and society at large to maintain traditional structures and patterns of intergenerational relations, including the transmission of values and knowledge, the provision of support and care and the transfer of resources. The societal role traditionally played by older persons in socializing the young has been challenged by new institutions and the media. Compulsory retirement brought about by modern labour relations and industrialization have led to the exclusion of older people from productive activities. On the other hand, in developed countries, the rapid ageing of their populations has increased the burden on public arrangements that formerly allowed older persons to live independently and free from poverty, thus threatening to disrupt intergenerational relations.

74. Countries have adopted measures to address these problems. Societies have developed new approaches to address the different needs of individuals during the various stages of their life cycle. The concept of "a society for all ages" is one of these approaches, and media campaigns have been launched in several countries. In addition, some countries have introduced educational programmes for older persons aiming at lifelong skill development, and have promoted longer participation in the workforce. Other countries have adopted national policies for older persons, which include a series of measures to support them. At the international level, the General Assembly declared 1999 the International Year of Older Persons. Observance of the Year will be guided by the concepts and strategies originated in the World Assembly on Ageing held in 1982, the 18 United Nations Principles for Older Persons contained in General Assembly resolution 46/91, and the economic, social and cultural rights of older persons set out in general comment No. 6 (1995) (see E/C.12/1995/16) adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (see A/53/294).

75. The Summit also called for the recognition and respect of the rights of indigenous peoples. Recently, the value and diversity of indigenous peoples' cultures and their contribution to the development of society has gained wider recognition. Positive steps have been made by some countries to recognize through legislative means the identity of indigenous communities and to protect their rights. In some countries, strategies have been designed to remould the relationship between Governments and indigenous populations. Several countries have introduced and set up institutions and special programmes for indigenous peoples, including education and language programmes. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to ensure justice for indigenous people and to resolve the outstanding issues affecting them, including issues related to land ownership. The United Nations Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1994 –2003) offers a framework for programmes and activities to improve the conditions of the indigenous people in such areas as health, education, environment, development and human rights.

Commitment 5. Achievement of equality and equity between women and men

76. In 1995, both the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women recommended specific and practical strategies to be implemented at the community, regional and national levels as a means to address the specific institutional, socio-economic and cultural barriers that impede the advancement of women. Commitment 5 of the Summit calls, *inter alia*, for achieving equality and equity between

men and women, full respect for human dignity, and enhanced access and participation by women. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/203, advocated the development of comprehensive national strategies or plans of action on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration[15] by member States. Since that time, 105 Member States have officially submitted national action plans to the United Nations Secretariat, which has analysed them in terms of adherence to the recommendations of the Platform for Action,[16] preparation, content, actions defined and resources allocated.[17]

77. The overall assessment of the collective tenor of the national action plans shows that the majority of such plans contain both general policy recommendations and specific action proposals. However, most of them do not make any reference to either the amount of resources required or the sources of financing for the activities and strategies proposed. Hence, there has been enhanced awareness of the problems encountered by women and a general specification of remedial actions at local and national levels has taken place. On the other hand, concrete progress has been slow and erratic. Moreover, in the critical area of poverty alleviation, women's problems have intensified in the wake of the global fiscal crisis and economic recession. In this context, it is evident that far more extensive and effective measures are required at the national and international levels to address the serious issues of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion that particularly afflict women.

78. Since 1995, the United Nations and the international community have been vigilant in promoting the recommendations and proposals emanating from the Summit and the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, for instance, has been encouraging Governments to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; as of December 1998, a total of 163 countries had done so. Moreover, the Committee pinpoints specific instances of gender-based persecution, and monitors progress in various countries with respect to the adoption of laws against domestic violence, the inclusion of the principle of equality in legal and constitutional codes, and the level of participation of women in political and social areas.

79. The Commission on the Status of Women, in turn, constitutes an intergovernmental mechanism that coordinates the monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. It also encourages the adoption of institutional mechanisms and capacity-building for the advancement of women by national Governments and promotes political, economic and social progress, as well as the protection of human rights for women throughout the United Nations system.

80. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat has held a series of expert group meetings on the issue of women and health, as well as on other subjects. The Division also monitors the progress of eradication of illiteracy among women, the promotion of non-discriminatory education and training, elimination of violence against women, employment opportunities and the mainstreaming of gender issues in national government social-economic strategies and plans.

81. At the national level, it is true that the specific record of concrete achievements for women varies widely from country to country and from culture to culture. However, relevant

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[15] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[16] Ibid., annex II.

[17] See "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern. Summary of national action plans for implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action", informal paper presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session (2–13 March 1998).

and updated information that can serve as a basis for enumerating and assessing significant new trends in women's progress is scarce or unavailable. Nonetheless, on the basis of existing information, it is possible to make some generalizations to elucidate the prevailing status of the gender issue and underscore the simultaneous paradoxical perspective of gender sensitivity in the abstract, yet meagre gains in practice.

82. In the countries of the former USSR, national plans to monitor and improve the status of women are being promulgated. In Belarus, for example, the national plan of action for the improvement of the status of women, 1996–2000, sets out critical areas of concern, such as gender analysis of legislation, gender balance in administrative and diplomatic bodies, and promotion of women entrepreneurs. The Russian Federation national plan identifies as some critical issues human rights, including violence; equal rights and opportunities in the labour market; and publicity campaigns with regard to women's involvement in social movements and decision-making. In the economies in transition, however, the general economic malaise being experienced in almost every country in the 1990s has adversely affected women, who bear the brunt of financial dislocation and employment downsizing.

83. The developed countries show the greatest gains for women, in such areas as political rights and representation, economic development, health, educational opportunities and protection against violence. However, women still lag behind men in these countries in terms of salary scale, access to decision-making positions and family burden. They continue to be drastically under-represented relative to their numbers in society.

84. In the developing world, a much bleaker picture emerges in terms of the advancement of women since 1995. The Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, at its seventh session, held at Santiago, in November 1997, noted that in the aftermath of the Summit countries had made little progress, and in fact had even regressed in the areas of employment, poverty and social integration. The pattern of growth did not generate enough jobs in production, and the backwardness and heterogeneity of production hindered the attainment of equity.[18] In Latin America, however, the number of women occupying positions of decision-making power has increased in recent years, but these are in the main educated professionals who take an active part in community affairs. This pattern, however, is not replicated in Africa or South-east and South Asia.

85. Women have a higher incidence of poverty than do men. Women still earn in general, between 50 and 80 per cent of what men earn. In the early and mid–1990s, in Latin America, women's wages were equivalent on an overall basis to 72 per cent of men's wages. In urban areas, they averaged only two thirds of the amount earned by men. In low-productivity areas, inadequacy of incomes is pervasive for wage earners in microenterprises, which encompass a disproportionate number of women.

86. Generally speaking, in an economic slump, women are the first to lose jobs, and they are invariably thrown back upon increased work tasks at home. The social fallout includes poorer health, increased subjection to domestic violence, more marginalized existence at home and on the streets (women and girl child prostitution has been on the rise in many areas affected by poverty). At the global level, two thirds of illiterate adults are women. Women in marginalized situations have less access to health facilities. In sub-Saharan Africa, for

[18] See paper prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on sustainable development, poverty and gender, entitled "Latin America and the Caribbean: working towards the year 2000" presented at the seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, 19–21 November 1997.

example, 20 per cent of women are underweight; in South-East Asia the level is 45 per cent and in South Asia 60 per cent.[19] Malnourished women give birth to low birth-weight children. Uneducated mothers are also unlikely to advance the educational possibilities of their children.

Commitment 6. Access to health and education services

87. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action called for countries to make efforts towards achieving the goal of universal coverage and access by all to quality education and primary health care. The Summit recognizes the importance of the provisions of these services as a means to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and enhance social integration. Since the Summit, some progress has been made towards this goal. Still, much remains to be done. Meeting the basic social services for all, including the poor and vulnerable groups, continues to be one of the major policy concerns of Governments.

88. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, placed the concept of "Education for all" on the international agenda. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, has placed greater emphasis on promoting "Education for all". A global assessment will be made at the Education for All Forum in the year 2000, which will map out the efforts of the international community to achieve education for all. UNDP, UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank support this worldwide exercise.

89. Over 100 countries have set up their specific goals and plans to achieve education for all. Recent years have seen some gains in literacy rates, so that by 1995 77 per cent of the population 15 years and older were literate. But close to 900 million adults remain illiterate, two thirds of them female. At the same time, more than 130 million children of primary school age in developing countries, including 73 million girls, are growing up without access to basic education.[20] Primary school enrolment increased in many developing countries in the 1990s at a faster pace than in the 1980s. As a result, some four out of five children (age 6 to 11 years) were enrolled in school by mid-decade (see A/52/183–E/1997/74). Progress, however, has been uneven across regions, and setbacks have emerged in some countries.

90. The main trend of educational policies is the commitment of most countries to the universalization of education (education for all and education throughout life) and to improving the quality of education. Another noticeable trend — accountability — is mainly associated with policies designed to decentralize educational decision-making and improve educational effectiveness. Naturally, educational policies vary from country to country.

91. In the developing countries, "Education for all" goals, including improvement in the quality of basic education, has been the main focus of educational policies, at least to the extent that political and economic conditions have allowed. Major gains have been made in the expansion of primary schooling. Increases in enrolment have been attained through expanding the education budget in some countries or by changing priorities, and by improving the management of the education system. The partnership between the State, community and family has been an effective approach in solving problems of primary

[19] See UNDP, *Overcoming Human Poverty* ..., p.75.

[20] See UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1999*.

education. Attention has also been given to expanding early childhood care and development activities, improving learning opportunities, and mobilizing families and communities.

92. There has been success in increasing enrolment in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa, West Asia and South Asia, despite the fact that educational policies have been constrained by economic and political circumstances. However, the most populous countries of the South Asian region are still a long way from ensuring universal primary completion. Latin America and the Caribbean have undertaken major initiatives towards the decentralization of education systems. In East Asia, where access to primary education has virtually been achieved, policy focus has shifted to a rapid progress towards universalization of secondary education. Pressures are building for expansion of tertiary level education in the region as well.[21] In addition, many countries have given renewed attention to the basic education of adults. A few developing countries have launched major adult literacy programmes in recent years. Other adult learning programmes and initiatives include instruction of basic skills, on-the-job training, continuing vocational education, distance education, television and radio networks.

93. Developed countries have been seeking to redefine accountability structures and continued to expand access to education, especially at the tertiary level. The situation in several countries with economies in transition in the field of education has deteriorated. A few transition countries are facing the prospect of re-emerging illiteracy. With the fall in economic output and the subsequent decline in educational expenditure, there has been overall erosion in physical infrastructure, quality of teaching personnel and availability of teaching materials. While improving the quality of education and the efficiency of the educational system remains important, it is equally important to provide adequate funding for secondary and tertiary education, encourage private education and prevent the reversal of social gains achieved earlier.

94. Many countries have placed emphasis on promoting equity in education. There is clear evidence that the economic and social rates of return to schooling are higher for females than men. Yet in most developing countries, girls' enrolment is lower than is boys'. The gap in gender enrolment is widest at the secondary and tertiary levels. A wide variety of measures are being undertaken to encourage schooling of girls and reduced gender disparities in enrolment. Efforts have been made to recruit more women teachers and locate schools closer to where students live.

95. Financial incentives, such as provision of scholarships to the poor, have been adopted in some countries as a means to increase enrolment and attendance. Attention is given to students from rural areas and to adapting education to children with special needs, including ethnic and linguistic minorities. Programmes designed to demonstrate the importance of educating children in order to increase the demand for schooling among the poor have been undertaken. For linguistic minorities, bilingual programmes and schools offering a choice of language of instruction have been promoted in some countries of Latin America and South-East Asia. Special programmes to improve the nutrition and health of school children are also being offered.

96. There has been a growing concern in most countries with strengthening the link between education and employment. Many students who leave school with no adequate qualifications, knowledge or skills face particular difficulties in transition to work, thus contributing to increased youth unemployment, as in the case of developed countries. A related concern in the industrialized economies concerns adults who have not been able to

[21] See UNESCO, *World Education Report 1998*, p. 31.

develop an adequate educational base and who are at particular risk of long-term joblessness. Fast technological change implies that existing skills can become obsolete very quickly. As a result, developed countries give high priority to the availability of a broad range of options after compulsory schooling to meet the growing and diverse skill needs of the workplace. Creation of suitable academic and vocational pathways for learners at all levels and ages are being considered in these countries.

97. The 1990s have seen a growing recognition of the need in developed countries to promote lifelong learning in order to prevent social exclusion caused by long-term unemployment. Efforts are being made to adapt education and training systems to the evolving needs of an increasing global and information-based economy. The "Life-long learning for all" strategy has been adopted as the basic framework for guiding education and training policies in these countries. This framework seeks to foster learning societies where every individual receives the necessary knowledge and skills and where all are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning. Focus is placed on making learning a process extending from early childhood through old age, and occurring in schools, the workplace and many other settings.

98. In the field of health, emphasis on primary health care has become a blueprint for the formulation of health policies at the national and international levels, as suggested by the Alma Alta Declaration on Primary Health Care in 1978. While Governments' commitment to the aims of "Health for all" remains strong, the implementation of the strategies to achieve those aims has in many cases slowed down. This has resulted not only from the strategies of severe fiscal restraint adopted by some countries but also from the rigidity of health systems, weak infrastructure, and in some cases the inadequacy of efforts to promote health and prevent specific health problems.

99. Funding for health care has been a major source of concern among policy makers, owing to the rising costs of medical care — due to rising incomes of doctors, increasing technological sophistication of treatments, and the rising cost and wider use of drugs — which have threatened the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of primary health-care interventions. Moreover, additional demands have been placed on health-care systems given the growing environmental health problems, the ageing of populations and the greater expectations regarding quality of health care.[22]

100. In developed countries, the public debate on health policies has been driven largely by economic considerations. The rapid growth of health expenditures has led to reform proposals aimed at fostering competition among health providers. In addition, issues of access are of particular relevance for some of the industrialized countries. Health-care reforms in many transition countries have placed emphasis on changing the design as well as the financial base of health-care systems. Increased private sector participation and decentralization to local governments have been central to reform efforts. In these countries, there has been a shift in the burden of health-care financing from public to private or quasi-public organizations. In developing countries, the focus of health policies has been on enhancing the effectiveness of health-care delivery systems and improving its equity, given the lack of access or the inadequate access to health-care services of people belonging to the poorer socio-economic and ethnic groups or living in rural areas.

101. Nonetheless, few countries have adopted equity-based health policies and strategies. In the majority of poor countries, a large share of the health budget is still allocated to tertiary care, thus leaving few resources for primary health care. In addition, poorly managed

[22] See World Health Organization (WHO), *World Health Report 1998*, p. 145.

decentralization and growing privatization of health care has become a problem by itself, leading to increased inefficiency and wider disparities (both in terms of access to and quality of services) in some countries. Severe policy failures have emerged. The maintenance of health facilities appears to be a problem in many countries, and communities are becoming increasingly involved in establishing, equipping and maintaining the health infrastructure in some other countries.

102. Access to safe water and sanitation is still far from agreed targets in many developing countries. Polluted water is a major health problem, and growing water scarcity exacerbates this crisis. The rural population remains at a disadvantage, with minimal coverage, and current trends in the provision of services are insufficient to achieve full coverage in the near future. The policy focus in developing countries is shifting now from drinking-water quality alone towards overall environmental improvement, involving water supplies, sanitation, hygiene education and community involvement in environmental management. Cholera, however, remains a challenge in countries where access to safe water and sanitation is poor. In Africa, for instance, there was a 56 per cent increase in the incidence of cholera in 1996 over 1995, with a case fatality rate of 5.7 per cent, the highest in any region (see E/1998/20).

103. The Summit also had specific concerns related to human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). AIDS has been inflicting a devastating toll on mortality and population loss. According to the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the worldwide number of people infected with HIV is 33.4 million, up from 27.6 million in 1997. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is the most serious health problem of many African countries. According to the 1997 report by the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries (OSCAL), AIDS cases in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated at 22.2 per 100,000 people, compared with 4.8 per 100,000 in the developing countries and 5.6 per 100,000 in the industrialized countries in 1995. More than two thirds of people with HIV in the world live in sub-Saharan Africa. Reports indicate that one in every 40 adults in sub-Saharan Africa is infected with the HIV virus, which causes AIDS. The death toll from HIV/AIDS in Africa is estimated at over 2 million and is projected to increase rapidly.

104. In both developing and industrialized countries, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has had multiple long-term social consequences, affecting families and children. Children who lost their parents to AIDS have been deprived of family financial support as well as parental care and attention. The numerical estimates of the scale of such cases are often missing, but when they exist a tragic picture emerges. For example, in the United States, in New York City alone about 28,000 children have been orphaned by AIDS since the epidemics began in 1981. Some rural communities in countries in Africa have been devastated by the disease, and children have had to live alone, at best getting some support from the local community.

105. The most affected countries in Africa are taking bold measures despite their meagre resources to control the spread of the disease, although such efforts need to be sustained with more assistance from the international community if Africa is to succeed in containing this deadly disease. National responses to the epidemic have included prevention and care programmes, efforts at behaviour change, blood safety programmes, testing and counselling, and community mobilization. However, the major concern in a large number of developing countries is lack of funding for education, followed by — in Africa in particular — the lack of availability and affordability of most forms of treatment.

106. UNAIDS continues to strengthen and support an expanded response aimed at preventing the transmission of HIV, providing care and support, reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities, and alleviating the impact of the epidemic. UNAIDS also

coordinates United Nations action at the national and international levels. It helps to build networks of individuals and institutions to identify promising approaches and best practices. Focus is given to supporting developing countries and economies in transition in formulating national plans of action, disseminating best practices and providing funding for national activities.[23]

Commitment 7. Acceleration of development in Africa and in the least developed countries

107. World leaders committed themselves at Copenhagen to accelerating the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries. Many African and least developed countries, with the assistance of the United Nations organizations and the international community, are undertaking various actions to support the implementation of the Summit's commitments for Africa. Special reference should be made to: (a) the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF); (b) the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries in the 1990s; and (c) measures taken to ensure that communicable diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, do not restrict or reverse the progress made by African countries in economic and social development.

108. Throughout the 1980s and especially after the launching in December 1991 of UN-NADAF, the need to accord top priority to African development was widely recognized by African countries and their development partners. This was underscored by several international initiatives, including the Tokyo Declaration adopted at the first and second Tokyo International Conferences on African Development held in December 1993 and October 1998, and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of UN-NADAF, which was launched in March 1996.

109. African countries also launched major initiatives to address their concerns, including the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Management and Resolution (1993); the entry into force of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community in May 1994; and the Cairo Agenda for Action (1995). In addition, there has been an effort to establish and strengthen regional mechanisms primarily focused on economic cooperation and integration. Examples of such efforts include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Southern African Development Community; the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African Communities; the Intergovernmental Authority on Development; and the East African Cooperation. Many African countries have also given priority to the promotion and enhancement of good governance, with emphasis on tolerance, accountability, human rights and the rule of law; capacity-building and human resources development; structural transformation of African economies; and effective mobilization and efficient utilization of resource flows.

110. The convergence of views between African countries and the international community on the need to promote African development seems to have produced some encouraging results, as reflected in the findings of recent reports prepared by the Secretary-General, including issues raised in the mid-term review of UN-NADAF (see A/53/390; and A/52/871–S/1998/318).

111. Overall, many African countries have attempted to implement economic reforms, in many cases with the assistance of international governmental organizations. For example,

[23] See UNAIDS, Report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, 1998.

22 countries have agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF). In addition, a number of African countries are adopting measures, such as the promotion of privatization, trade liberalization, labour flexibility and the strengthening of the financial sector. Furthermore, a number of countries have introduced reforms on their taxation system in order to increase its efficiency and transparency. At the same time, the mid-term review noted that many countries have introduced policy reforms in order to encourage foreign investments.

112. Considering the record of the past decade and a half, the mid-term review confirmed that since the beginning of the implementation of UN-NADAF, Africa has experienced a sustained albeit fragile recovery. However, the extent to which this performance can be maintained may vary from one country to another. Overall, the economic situation of a member of African countries continues to improve over the past few years due to prudent fiscal and monetary policies. Public fiscal deficit for the region as a whole declined to 2.4 per cent of GDP in 1997 (3.8 per cent in 1996), and the rate of growth of broad money aggregates was reduced to 16 per cent (25 per cent in 1996). These factors contributed to lowering inflation in the continent to below 20 per cent in 1997.[24] Compared to the early 1990s, the review found that twice as many countries (40) recorded growth rates of 3 per cent or more in the mid-1990s and per capita income rose during the period.

113. The year 1997 registered — for the first time during the current decade net positive transfers of financial resources through medium and long-term borrowing from private sources (about $7 billion). Foreign direct investment flows stabilized at about $3.6 billion per year over the past three years. This is a positive development. Nonetheless, such flows represent a tiny share of total net foreign direct investment (FDI) flows going to developing countries (about 10 per cent in 1997), while a significant share of such flows is highly concentrated in only few economies of the region (Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa and Morocco). In addition, there is some doubt whether FDI flows to the region will be maintained in the next years given the weakening of commodity prices and the effects of the global financial crisis.

114. The region has also been able to attract some private short-term capital, as net inflows have become positive since 1993 and reached $3.5 billion in 1997. Some degree of concentration in the destination of short-term flows is also observed. In any case, as private flows to the region have increased, transfers through official flows have been declining since 1992 and were only $2.1 billion (net terms) in 1997, the lowest level during the last 10 years (see A/53/228). In addition to the overall decrease in ODA flows, the share of Africa in total net disbursements of ODA by OECD/DAC countries declined from an average of 38 per cent in 1993–1994 to 36 per cent in 1995–1996. ODA allocation by DAC members to least developed countries also declined over the past decade from almost 35 per cent in 1985–1986 to about 30 per cent in 1995–1996. Similarly, Africa's share in the International Development Association's total lending declined from an average of almost 40 per cent during fiscal years 1994–1995 to about 37 per cent during fiscal years 1997–1998.

115. Although the debt overhang continues to severely constrain Africa's development efforts, progress on this issue has been achieved by some countries in Africa within the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative: Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and Mozambique received Lyons terms on their debt restructuring agreements with the Paris Club of creditor countries. This will provide them with an 80 per cent reduction in net present value terms — instead of the 67 per cent reduction under the Naples terms — of their burden on eligible

[24] See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *The Least Developed Countries 1998 Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.II.D.11).

debt. In addition, the African Development Bank has established a $150 million supplementary financing mechanism to assist eligible African countries in servicing their loans from the Bank. Earlier in 1998, the Secretary-General called for the conversion of all remaining official bilateral debt owed by the poorest African countries into grants (see A/52/871–S/1998/318). Recently, the Government of Japan announced measures that will effectively forgive 90 per cent of some 10 heavily indebted African countries seriously making efforts to meet their repayment schedules.

116. Notwithstanding the above, the 1997 report on African development prepared by OSCAL identified inherent weaknesses in the economies of African countries. For example, despite growth, per capita GDP in 1996 remained below the 1980 level. Moreover, the recent acceleration in the rate of GDP growth that the continent experienced in 1995 and 1996 was not sustained in 1997 due to economic weakening of some of the largest economies of the region. Prospects for 1998 are not positive given the contagion effects from the Asian crisis. Large disparities among countries persist. Other areas of concern include traditionally low savings and investments in Africa; undeveloped markets; the decline in manufacturing output due to sagging domestic demand; low prices of Africa's main export commodities; the heavy debt burden; the high cost of transactions and transportation; and the lack of sufficient communication links.

117. The OSCAL report also indicated the need to deal with the critical issues that continue to affect the implementation of UN-NADAF. These include the effects of globalization, the need for enhanced coordination of efforts in the mobilization of financial resources, the diversification of Africa's economies, and the harmonization of various multilateral and bilateral initiatives on Africa.

118. Many of the above actions have also impacted on the development of the least developed countries as 33 of the 48 least developed countries are African. Having undertaken wide-ranging reforms, least developed countries as a group have made progress, growing by 5.5 per cent in 1996 and 4.8 per cent in 1997. However, their recent economic recovery remains fragile because of their continued reliance on the export of a few primary commodities, the occurrence of civil strife and natural disasters. With regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries in the 1990s, the 1997 report indicates that little progress has been made, especially in the areas related to ODA, debt relief, FDI and trade. The target of 0.15 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA to least developed countries set by the Programme of Action has only been consistently met by four countries, despite the fact that requirements to modernize infrastructure and invest in human development have increased. Only one least developed country has benefited from full fledged relief under the HIPC initiative, and only three are expected to reach completion by the year 2000. The least developed countries continue to be marginalized in world trade. The full implementation of the special and differential measures in favour of least developed countries contained in the Uruguay Round, the removal of tariff peaks and tariff escalation, and the strengthening of their capacity to supply exportable goods and services would increase market access for these countries.

119. Commitment 7 also invited countries to ratify the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa. It is encouraging to note that following meetings organized in August 1996 and September 1997, the Convention has been ratified and has come into force. Decisions have also been taken by the Conference of Parties on the location of the secretariat of the Convention and administrative matters concerning the secretariat. Meanwhile, many Governments in Africa and other affected regions are reported to be making progress on the elaboration of national, subregional and regional action programmes

in the fight against desertification, with the assistance of the secretariat. These programmes also involve the designation of national focal points, establishment of national coordinating committees and the holding of national awareness seminars to sensitize a wide audience to the issue of combating desertification, not only at the national level but at the provincial and local levels as well.

Commitment 8. Inclusion of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes

120. Commitment 8 reflects Governments' concerns about the negative social consequences of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) sponsored by the multilateral financial institutions. Accordingly, countries committed themselves to include social development goals in their SAP, including the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment and the enhancement of social integration. At the international level, this Commitment encourages multilateral development banks and other donors to complement adjustment lending with targeted social development investment lending, and to support national requests to give priority to social programmes in the formulation of SAPs.

121. Balance of payments disequilibria have been the main reason for policy-based lending. Structural adjustment lending provides finance for balance of payment viability, and encourages structural reforms that aim to promote sustainable growth. The strategy normally required by the International Monetary Fund and until recently by the World Bank usually involves the adoption of austere fiscal and monetary policies to reduce the aggregate domestic demand. This often leads to deep cuts in public expenditures, including investment, higher interest rates and an overall contradiction in credit supply. As a result, contrary to expectations, growth collapses, unemployment increases, inflation accelerates and real wages plummet. Short-term measures are frequently followed by economic restructuring policies, such as privatization, domestic market deregulation, and trade and foreign investment liberalization. Reforms, however, take a long time to mature, and in the meantime economic development has often been retarded and inequality and poverty increased.

122. While fiscal expenditures do not necessarily decline (as a share of GDP) in countries undergoing adjustment, their composition is often dramatically changed. Jobs in public administration, including human services, have sometimes had to be cut. Subsidies have been eliminated or reduced, particularly those on essential goods, such as basic foodstuff and petroleum; this has triggered violent protests in several countries. Interest payments on the domestic and external debt increase as a result of devaluation and higher interest rates, thus leaving fewer resources available for other public expenditures.

123. Fiscal reforms have also included the search for new sources of revenue for the public budget. Countries have been urged to introduce cost-sharing charges and user fees on services that were usually provided free de facto, rationing the supply of these services to those who could not afford the price. Some programmes have exempted the poor from paying such fees, but targeting has not been perfect and the poor have not been effectively protected in many cases.

124. Social spending has been affected, particularly during the earlier generation of reforms in the 1980s. Most recently, some countries have been able to shelter their social spending. But the debate on this issue is not settled. Analysing 144 loans operations, mostly carried out in the 1980s, a World Bank publication states that while public expenditures in social services fell less than all discretionary expenditures, per capita social spending decreased in real terms in almost two thirds of the countries analysed. School enrolment dropped in

a large number of countries during the adjustment period. The IMF — assessing the experience of 66 countries with programmes supported by the Fund during a more recent period (1986–1996) — claims that spending on health and education fared reasonably well during the adjustment period. Countries supported by an SAF or ESAF programmes (concessional windows for low-income countries) witnessed larger increases in these expenditures than countries with other arrangements with the Fund. The Fund, however, does acknowledge that most sub-Saharan African countries experienced declines in real per capita social expenditure, particularly in education.[25]

125. Starting during the second half of the 1980s, SAP began to include a social component — usually but not exclusively through the introduction of a social fund — to compensate those sectors of the population mostly adversely affected by the reforms. But compensation measures, however well designed and implemented, should not be equated with the inclusion and pursuit of social development goals in SAPs.

126. The World Bank has taken further measures to address the issue of the adverse social impacts of its programmes. Economic policies supported by the Bank have been evolving, and increasingly incorporate a social dimension. Poverty eradication has become a major goal for the institution. The Bank now favours the reallocation of public expenditures towards priority sectors, such as education and health. Within these sectors, it has been promoting expansion of basic education and primary health care, which should benefit low-income groups and the poor. The Bank recognizes the importance of participation by the civil society in the programmes it finances, and has encouraged the participation of communities and non-governmental organizations. Accordingly, the Bank has started to use social assessment techniques to incorporate social information and stakeholder participation into the design and implementation of the programmes it finances. Nonetheless, there is no comprehensive World Bank policy requiring social analysis or assessment but rather several related policies that require attention to social factors, including indigenous peoples, cultural property, environmental impacts, gender dimension of development, involuntary resettlement and non-governmental organization involvement. Only about 30 per cent of Bank projects during fiscal year 1998 were expected to involve social assessments.[26]

127. The IMF mandate includes the promotion of international monetary cooperation, a balanced growth in international trade and a stable system of exchange rates. However, the Fund has begun to become somewhat more attentive to the social consequences of the stabilization programmes that it sponsors. It has also come to recognize that with increasing democratization and participation of civil society, popular support for adjustment programmes is a precondition for their success.[27] Accordingly, the Fund has organized seminars and workshops to analyse questions of equity and social justice emerging from economic policies, and to explore possible ways to promote a more equitable pattern of growth.

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[25] See C. Jayarajah, W. Branson and B. Sen, "Social dimensions of adjustment: World Bank experience, 1980–1993", World Bank Operations Evaluation Study (Washington, D.C., 1996); and S. Gupta et al., "The IMF and the poor", IMF Pamphlet Series, No. 52 (Washington, D.C., IMF, 1998).

[26] According to World Bank data on social assessment, accessed at http://www.worldbank.org on 30 November 1998.

[27] See IMF, "Social dimension of the IMF's policy dialogue", IMF Pamphlet Series, No. 47, August 1998, accessed at http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/social.htm on 28 September 1998; and "Addressing concerns for the poor and social justice in debt relief and adjustment programmes", address by Michel Camdessus at a conference on the ethical dimensions of international debt, Seton Hall University, 22 October 1998, accessed at http://www.img.org/external/np/speeches/1998/102298.htm on 26 October 1998.

128. In addition, the Fund conducted internal and external evaluations assessing the experience of 36 countries under ESAF-supported arrangements during 1986–1995. The reviews aimed to identify areas that needed to be strengthened within the ESAF framework. The internal review noted, *inter alia*, that fiscal adjustment effort needed to be stronger and based on durable cuts in budget outlays. However, it recognizes that lack of investment in human capital has constrained the growth prospects of ESAF countries, and that high-priority social spending (health and education) should be protected during adjustment and from eventual declines in fiscal revenues. The external evaluators, on the other hand, went further in their comments by suggesting that *ex ante* impact assessments should be conducted, and that the Fund should explicitly analyse trade-offs between short and long-term approaches. They also stressed the importance of local ownership of economic reform programmes and the need for greater flexibility in the negotiating framework. The Fund's Executive Board was to draw operational conclusions from issues highlighted by both reviews.[28]

Commitment 9. Allocation of resources for social development

129. This commitment addresses issues of financial resources for social development. Countries committed themselves to increasing significantly and/or using more efficiently resources available in order to achieve the goals established at Copenhagen. It envisages a series of measures at the national level, including the implementation of macroeconomic policies to foster growth, the promotion of domestic savings and fair taxation systems, so that additional resources can become available. At the international level, countries will seek, among other things, to facilitate and increase the flows of resources to developing countries.

130. Programme reforms supported by the international financial organizations and adopted by developing countries and the economies in transition have had as one of their objectives the promotion of domestic savings, as well as the adoption of measures to attract foreign capital. Fiscal reforms not only aimed at producing a more efficient and rational taxing system and eliminating price distortions but also at slashing the fiscal deficit and eventually generating public savings. In addition, countries took a series of financial reforms so that real interest rates, which have been repressed, would become positive and stimulate savings. On the external front, barriers to foreign direct investment were removed in several countries, including in those sectors of the economy that have been previously considered as strategic or as of national interest. Controls on foreign exchange transactions and profit remittances were cut back.

131. Gross domestic savings as a percentage of GDP did increase in some countries and regions. South Asia, East Asia and the least developed countries are cases in point. In sub-Saharan Africa, domestic savings have remained stagnated, though the region has been showing some recovery lately. Not all countries, however, have been able to register improvements in their savings ratio. In Latin America, for instance, the share of gross domestic saving to GDP was lower in 1996 than in 1980.[29] The reforms also had a positive impact in increasing foreign direct investment flows. FDI to developing countries reached $85 billion in 1997, five times the level registered in 1990. Yet FDI flows are highly concentrated in only 10 developing countries, and in many cases have fallen sharply as a result of the financial crisis. Thus, the eventual benefits that FDI would bring to social

[28] See IMF annual report 1998 (Washington, D.C., 1998), pp. 69–73.

[29] See *World Economic and Social Survey 1998* ..., table A.12.

development are currently constrained. Short-term capital flows to a handful of developing countries have also increased, but given their volatility those flows have proved to provide only additional costs and further constraints and not resources for social programmes.

132. Fiscal consolidation efforts made in developed countries have affected resources allocated to social programmes. Finance ministers considered that the levels of expenditure allocated to these programmes, particularly those related to social security provisions, are non-sustainable and incompatible with the overall effort to bring public deficit in line with the Maastricht criteria. In addition, the generous unemployment, disability and old-age benefits existing in many of these countries were believed to discourage work effort and to increase the cost of labour, thus contributing to the unemployment problem in some of these economies. With emphasis being placed on the promotion of individual responsibility and self-reliance for achieving individual welfare, more attention is being given to the possibility of increasing reliance on private provision of social services (the community, the private sector and the family), in some instances with some support from public programmes.[30]

133. Prospects for additional resources for social development in the economies in transition are not yet promising. In the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, social expenditures have seriously declined in real terms as a result of the severe fiscal crisis that they face. In economies with a relatively more comfortable fiscal position, pressures on policy convergence for those aspiring to join the European Union place a constraint on expansion of social expenditures within the public budget. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Governments of countries in transition have made considerable progress in integrating their economies into the global economy. About half of their trade is currently carried out with the developed market economies. For Eastern European countries, that share reached 63 per cent in 1997. In addition, net foreign direct investment flows to these countries have increased over the past few years, and reached almost $19 billion in 1998 according to IMF estimates.

134. In the developing world, as discussed above, public expenditures on social services were very much constrained during the first generation of adjustment programmes, which followed the debt crisis in the early 1980s. Later on, the importance of such outlays was recognized, and many developing countries sheltered their social spending somewhat during the fiscal consolidation process of the late 1980s and mid-1990s. Nevertheless, this did not prevent either the decline of expenditures on a per capita basis in some countries or the deterioration in the quality of services supplied.[31] In Latin America, for instance, social expenditure as a share of GDP dropped during the 1980s, which led to a 24 per cent decline in per capita terms. During the 1990s, however, the majority of countries in the region have increased the share of social sectors in total public expenditures.[32] It is important to note that a substantial part of this increased social expenditure in the region is devoted to social security, and very little has been devoted to human development. Per capita expenditure on education, for instance, has barely recovered in 1995 the level it registered in 1980. In the ESCAP region, there has also been a modest increase for social expenditures within the public budget. Nonetheless, the allocation of resources for social development continues to be highly sensitive to macroeconomic fluctuations and suffers from a high degree of

[30] See David W. Kalisch et al., "Social and health policies in OECD countries: a survey of current programmes and recent developments".

[31] See C. Jayarajah et al., op. cit.

[32] However, the Caribbean countries, where social spending has been traditionally higher than in the rest of the region, have not shared this trend.

instability. In addition, social spending has been used as an instrument of adjustment to bring fiscal balances to desirable levels.[33]

135. Several countries undertook reforms to enlarge and rationalize their tax base. In some instances, there has been a replacement of direct by indirect taxation, which can have a negative impact on redistribution if not carefully designed. Cost recovery schemes, such as user fees, were introduced in several countries as a means to increase fiscal revenues. This, however, compounded problems of access and inequity. The introduction of targeting as a means to increase fiscal resources devoted to the more vulnerable groups (or to exempt them from fees) has produced some success in some cases, but in other instances it has failed to reach those targeted groups. Similar problems have been faced by the increasing participation of the private sector in the delivery of social services. Though the supply of such services increased in some countries, access has been limited to the better-off segments of the population. On the other hand, reforms that involved a more efficient use of existing fiscal resources have had a more favourable impact on certain vulnerable groups. Among such initiatives, reforms aiming at redistributing public expenditures away from tertiary education and expensive curative hospital care are cases in point.

136. Within the context of adjustment programmes, several countries established social emergency funds to mitigate the adverse impact of adjustment measures on vulnerable groups. Such funds usually act as intermediaries in collecting and allocating resources in specific projects. They have been financed by a wide variety of sources, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations, multilateral financial institutions, bilateral donors and local governments, and by innovative arrangements, such as debt conversions.[34]

137. Progress on reducing public expenditures on defence — and hence enabling the release of resources for social development — has slowed down recently. In the last two years, the decline in military spending has slowed down, at the global level, to an average rate of less than 1 per cent, against an average of 4.5 per cent over the 10-year period 1988–1997. In 1997, the overall amount of military expenditure stood roughly at $740 billion.[35] Military expenditure has declined in many regions of the world, in some cases by about one third over the past 10 years. However, considerable fluctuations do exist. Moreover, arms trade has been growing since 1994, but the volume is still lower than the 1987 level. Total international arms sales stood at $46.3 billion in 1997, a 36 per cent increase in real value since 1994.[36]

138. The external indebtedness of developing countries, particularly low-income countries, is a source of concern as the debt overhang constrains their growth prospects. Since the emergence of the external debt crisis in the early 1980s, the international community has devised a series of initiatives to deal with the difficulties that developing countries have

[33] See ECLAC, "The fiscal covenant: strengths, weakness, challenges", 1998; ESCAP, "Review of national progress achieved in the implementation of the Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP region, in the context of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development", paper presented at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, Manila, 5–11 November 1997, accessed at http://unescap.org/sps/paper2.htm on 3 November 1998; and ECA, *African Economic Report 1998*, accessed at http://www.un.org/Depts/eca/ divis/espd/aer98.htm on 7 October 1998.

[34] See ECLAC, "The equity gap: Latin America and the Caribbean and the social summit", paper presented at the First Regional Conference on the Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, Sao Paulo, 6–9 April 1997.

[35] See *SIPRI Yearbook 1998: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

[36] See International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997/1998* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

faced in servicing their debts. Debt stock and debt service reductions were gradually incorporated in the management of commercial debt through buybacks and swaps. Debt owed to official bilateral creditors has also been restructured on more favourable conditions as the Paris Club adopted a series of initiatives offering increasing concessionality on the rescheduling of the eligible debt. Bilateral creditors have also cancelled significant amounts of debt owed to them. This notwithstanding, the situation of some countries indebted to multilateral financial institutions remained unsustainable. In those countries, the servicing of the external debt absorbs a considerable share of government revenues. Among 22 HIPCs for which there is available information, the external debt service consumed over 9 per cent of tax revenues in 18 of them during the period 1993–1995. In nine of them, that share can be well above 20 per cent. In September 1996, the Interim and Development Committees of the World Bank and IMF took a significant step towards a durable solution to the debt problem with the endorsement of the HIPC initiative.

139. The initiative allows for a more equitable burden-sharing among creditors. Relief is also extended to multilateral debt servicing so that indebted countries can achieve a sustainable debt position. As of September 1998, nine highly indebted poor countries had their cases reviewed, seven of which (Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, Mali, Mozambique and Uganda) were considered eligible for assistance under the HIPC initiative. Consequently, about $6 billion of debt service relief will be extended to these countries in nominal terms. The other two countries (Benin and Senegal) had their debt situation considered as sustainable and hence did not qualify for additional assistance (see A/53/373). In September 1998, the IMF and World Bank Executive Boards agreed to extend the original period for potential eligible countries to begin their adjustment programmes for an additional two years (end of the year 2000). They also agreed to extend some increased flexibility in considering the case of post-conflict countries and to undertake a comprehensive review of the initiative in 1999.[37]

140. The importance of the availability of resources for social development is also recognized by the 20/20 initiative, which encourages Governments and donors to allocate additional resources to the provision of basic services, and to use such resources more effectively and equitably. The initiative calls for the allocation of, on average, 20 per cent of public budgets in developing countries and 20 per cent of ODA to basic social services. International agencies involved in the implementation of the initiative estimate that there is an annual shortfall of about $70 to $80 billion in current allocations to basic social services to ensure access by all.[38] As a follow-up to the Summit, the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands invited a number of countries and interested international organizations to review the implementation of the initiative. The meeting was held at Oslo in April 1996. Participants in the Oslo meeting agreed that a follow-up meeting should be organized in order to exchange information and experience and to assess the progress in implementing the initiative. The review took place at Hanoi in October 1998, and was attended by 29 developing countries and 19 donor countries, as well as governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations. The meeting adopted the "Hanoi consensus on the 20/20 initiative: achieving universal access to basic social services".

141. ODA has been an important source of resources for supporting social development in recipient countries. As a share of the combined GNP of DAC countries, ODA reached 0.22 per cent in 1997, the lowest level since the United Nations adopted the target of

[37] See IMF/World Bank Development Committee, "HIPC initiative: a progress report" (DC/98–22), 29 September 1998.

[38] See UNDP/UNESCO/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank, "Implementing the 20/20 initiative: achieving universal access to basic social services" (New York, UNICEF, September 1998).

0.7 per cent in 1970. Only four countries (Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden) have met and even surpassed that target for the past few years. In dollar terms, ODA flows amounted to $47.6 billion in 1997, down from $55.6 billion in 1996.[39] ODA budgets have received disproportional cuts during the fiscal consolidation process that has taken place in donor countries. However, some countries are in the process of revising their ODA, and have indicated their intentions to reverse the declining trend.

142. Another trend refers to the fact that over the past few years increasing portions of ODA have been devoted to humanitarian needs and debt relief, including forgiveness of non-ODA debt — certainly deserving matters as well — leaving fewer resources available for development programmes. Debt relief and emergency aid absorbed more than 15 per cent of DAC's total commitments in 1993 and 1994, and about 12.5 per cent in 1995. On the other hand, social development has gained renewed priority in the allocation of DAC's resources as the share of total commitments dedicated to social and administrative infrastructure (education, health and population, water supply and sanitation, Government and civil society and other social infrastructure/service) has been increasing, and reached 30.5 per cent of that total in 1995, up from 25.1 per cent in 1993. Nonetheless, the positive effects of such increased priority accorded to social sectors has been largely offset by the overall contraction in ODA flows, thus actually making available fewer resources than could have been expected.

143. A positive development is DAC's adoption of specific targets on social development and economic well-being in line with the objectives of several world conferences sponsored by the United Nations. According to DAC countries, the focusing of ODA on fewer objectives improves the positive impact of aid on the most troubling areas of the development process.

144. The United Nations system is another important source of resources for social development. Almost all operational development activities of the United Nations system are financed by grants, thus providing critical resources for countries experiencing severe balance of payment constraints. The total amount of resources available to the United Nations system for operational activities for development remained stagnant at about $5.5 billion during the period 1994–1996, and declined to $5.1 billion in 1997. About 39 per cent of grant-financed expenditures were devoted to social development programmes in 1997. An additional 17 per cent were absorbed by humanitarian assistance during 1998.[40]

145. Within the World Bank group (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and International Development Association), increasing attention is being paid to projects related to social development (education; population, health and nutrition; social sector; water supply and sanitation). Their share in the group's total lending commitments increased from about 20 per cent in fiscal year 1994 to about 26 per cent in fiscal year 1996. In fiscal 1997, however, the sector received 21 per cent of total commitments; in fiscal 1998, its share is estimated to be 24 per cent. The Group made $28 billion in loan commitments in fiscal 1998, a significant increase over fiscal 1997 ($19.1 billion). About half of that increase ($4.8 billion) went to countries of the East Asia and

[39] Part of the decline in ODA flows in 1997 can be attributed to the graduation of important recipient countries. Israel, no longer on the DAC's list of recipient countries, received $2.2 billion in ODA from the United States in 1996, according to an OECD news release. Aid and private flows fell in 1997, according to data accessed at <http://www.oecd.org//dac/htm/nw98–64a.htm> on 28 September 1998.

[40] Social development programmes include the following ACC programme classification categories: population, human settlements, health, education, employment, social development and culture; see A/53/226 and Add.3.

Pacific region.[41] Among the regional development banks, the Inter-American Development Bank allocated 43 per cent of its loans to social sectors in 1997 (up from 37 per cent in 1995). In the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank, that share is significantly smaller (13 and 19 per cent, respectively).

146. The Secretary-General has recently reported on new and innovative ideas for generating additional resources to implement globally agreed goals, including increased public and private partnerships (for instance, the issuance of collateralized bond obligations), increased links between micro-credit markets and the formal conventional financial markets; increased developmental responsibility of private enterprises; and debt swaps. Some of these ideas have already been implemented in some countries. Other innovative ideas and approaches have been recently discussed at workshops organized by the United Nations Secretariat. Their major findings and conclusions are being presented to the Commission for Social Development (see A/52/203–E/1997/85; and E/CN.5/1999/7).

Commitment 10. Cooperation for social development

147. The implementation of the Copenhagen commitments on the international level implies an active search for forward-looking policies by Governments, international agencies and other actors, as well as better collaboration between them and a reformed and reinforced United Nations. This collaboration is particularly relevant in the face of the growing social and economic impact of the ongoing integration of the world economy, especially given the asymmetric distribution of benefits and risks arising from the globalization process. In this context, in September 1998 the General Assembly convened a high-level meeting on renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership, on the overall theme of "The social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications". This represented a positive step towards finding common solutions for a more equitable sharing of the benefits of the globalization process while minimizing its overall costs.

148. International cooperation has played a crucial role — in some instances more effectively than in others — in helping countries to address their financial crises. Large amounts of resources have been amassed from individual countries and international and regional financial organizations to temporarily replace private flows that suddenly disappeared in panic. New approaches and facilities have been created. The International Monetary Fund, for instance, set up new financial mechanisms to assist countries in crisis, such as the Emergency Financing Mechanism and the Supplemental Reserve Facility.

149. The current crisis, however, has made it clear that the Fund's financial ability to provide resources to crisis-ridden countries is limited. It has also exposed the deficiencies of existing regulatory and surveillance mechanisms, both in developed and developing countries. There is thus a greater need for a better international cooperation and coordination among the major actors in the financial area. Accordingly, earlier this year, the Finance Ministers of the Group of Seven called for the establishment of a system of multilateral surveillance of national financial, supervisory and regulatory systems. They also asked relevant institutions to present proposals in this regard. A number of proposals have already emerged, but no consensus yet exists.

150. Concerns about the social consequences of economic reforms have gained increased attention in the past few years, and as a result programmes supported by the international

[41] See World Bank, annual report, various issues.

financial organizations now contain specific measures to address these concerns. However, a comprehensive, people-centred and well-thought through approach has yet to emerge.

151. The international economic environment is very much influenced by policies adopted by the developed countries. Macroeconomic policy coordination among the major industrialized countries has proved difficult and has been limited. In September 1998, however, the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the Group of Seven countries, meeting in London, acknowledged the shift in the balance of risks in the world economy as growth prospects deteriorated in many parts of the world. They noted the importance of close cooperation among themselves, and emphasized their commitment to create conditions for sustainable economic growth in their domestic economies. Interest rates have since been reduced in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy and the countries entering the European Monetary Union.

152. International cooperation has also played a supportive role in the development efforts of developing countries. At its high-level meeting of May 1995, members of OECD/DAC launched a new initiative calling for development partnerships in the new global context. The initiative reaffirms several of the principles adopted at Copenhagen, and recognizes the importance of locally owned development strategies. It also proposes a new paradigm for development cooperation, aiming at increased integration of developing countries' economies into the global system and at enhanced opportunities for all human beings. However, ODA flows have been declining. Support has also been given by the international community to the economies in transition in transforming their economies and integrating them into the global system. Specific actions on this front have recently been highlighted by a report of the Secretary-General on this subject (A/53/336; see also A/51/285).

153. Beyond the role of the Bretton Woods institutions in international cooperation (discussed under commitments 8 and 9 above), most multilateral development banks have identified poverty reduction and improvement in living standards as important policy goals. For example, the Inter-American Development Bank has undertaken measures to improve the quality and availability of information on poverty and inequality. It has also charted a poverty reduction strategy calling for the promotion of sustainable and labour-intensive economic growth, investments in human capital and special efforts to reach those groups which may not be able to benefit from growth. The Asian Development Bank has promoted poverty reduction through the enhancement of broad-based economic growth, the expansion of basic social services and by targeted interventions which should be tailored by the needs of specific countries.

154. Commitment 10 specifically called for strengthening the structure, resources and processes of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. Part of this effort would be to establish a closer working relationship with the specialized agencies and to draw upon the work done on a common framework for the implementation of the outcomes of global conferences. The Council, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/227 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, has considered this item at each of its subsequent substantive sessions. Its objective has been the strengthening of its role as the central mechanism for coordination of the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, as well as of its oversight role in respect of subsidiary bodies, in particular its functional commissions, in the economic, social and related fields.

155. The Council has been committed to promoting a coordinated follow-up to the outcome of the major international conferences sponsored by the United Nations. In this connection, the Council adopted in 1998 decisions on this topic which covered five areas: cross-cutting issues; coordination and management role of the Council; inter-agency coordination;

country-level follow-up; and evaluation of the integrated implementation of conference follow-up. The Council also reached agreements, after reviewing the work of its functional commissions with specific responsibilities for the follow-up of the major United Nations conferences, on such issues as working methods, interrelationship between functional commissions, and relations with the regional commissions and other relevant regional bodies. The main purpose of those endeavours was a quest for increased harmonization of relevant activities, as well as the need to avoid duplication of efforts.

156. In response to the Summit's call for a continuous and substantive dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, the Economic and Social Council held a special high-level meeting with the World Bank and IMF in April 1998. That dialogue, held for the first time in the history of the Council, produced some useful exchange of views and discussions on globalization and its repercussions. In addition, there have been mutual efforts by the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions to increase the information flow between them and to undertake regular dialogue on social issues.

157. The Economic and Social Council also reviewed the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission for Social Development, including steps aimed at strengthening the Commission. By its resolution 1996/7, the Council decided to entrust the Commission with the primary responsibility for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the Summit. To that end, it also decided to enlarge the Commission's membership from 32 to 46, annualize its meetings, and adopt a new structure of its agenda and multi-year programme of work for the years 1997–2000. "Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development" was adopted as the main substantive item. Accordingly, the Commission considered the priority themes of eradication of poverty in 1996, productive employment and sustainable livelihoods in 1997, social integration in 1998, and will consider social services for all in 1999.

158. The Commission for Social Development now serves as the principal forum for discussion by the international community of social development issues in an integrated and holistic manner, within the framework provided by the Summit. The adoption of the multi-year programme of work of the Commission has rendered intergovernmental dialogue more focused and policy-oriented, while the convening of in-session panels of experts has served to enrich the debates and improve international understanding of social concerns and emerging issues.

159. In 1995, ACC established three inter-agency task forces on (a) basic services for all, (b) employment and sustainable livelihoods, and (c) the enabling environment for social and economic development, as well as the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. The work of those bodies has demonstrated the importance of a coherent system-wide effort supportive of national programmes to implement decisions of the Summit.

160. The Summit also invited the regional commissions to convene biennial meetings at a high political level to evaluate the outcome of the Summit, as well as to exchange views on their respective experiences and adopt appropriate measures. As a follow-up to that decision, conferences were organized in the Asia and Pacific region, in the Latin America and Caribbean region, and in the European region. Those meetings focused on the social agenda pertinent to each region, and gave emphasis to unresolved social issues. They also explored ways and means to implement decisions of the Summit. Furthermore, the regional conferences allowed for valuable exchange of experiences that will permit policies aimed at fulfilling the Summit agreements to be targeted more efficiently in the future. Regional and subregional meetings will be organized in the African and Western Asian regions in the latter part of 1998 and in 1999.

161. The work programmes of the regional commissions have been reoriented towards the implementation and follow-up of the Summit. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, has conducted studies on such issues as growth and social equity, the role of social policy and educational reform. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is conducting a series of analytical studies, including an assessment of the causes underlying the current financial crisis and possible policy measures for preventing future upheavals. Analytical work undertaken at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has included a preliminary overview of socio-economic developments in the region for 1997–1998. The Economic Commission for Africa has been placing special emphasis on social policy and poverty analysis, and on promoting a dialogue with Member States on equity and growth, and linkages between poverty, gender and ethnicity. The Economic Commission for Europe has focused on social statistics, employment creation and on such issues as economic reforms and their impact on income distribution, employment and poverty.

III. Conclusion

162. The implementation process of the goals decided at Copenhagen has been progressing at various degrees of speed and success. Most countries have taken some steps towards fulfilling the commitments made at the Summit. Efforts have been devoted towards redesigning national policies and strategies so that they can reflect principles stated in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. In several countries, there have been positive signs of change in policy orientation in relation to paying renewed attention to the problem of unemployment and poverty. Nonetheless, much more needs to be done.

163. This review highlighted the fact that several of the targets specified in the Programme of Action will not be met within the period agreed, and in some instances there have been severe setbacks. There is still a great deal of human suffering that can be avoided. Huge disparities persist across countries and regions. Progress has been quite slow in some of them due to a wide range of factors that need to be addressed both by national Governments and the international community. In addition, the newly designed policies need to be implemented and translated into concrete action as well. There have been some delays and slowdowns in this area. Also, the call for partnership by the Summit will need to be fully implemented.

164. Progress observed in the fight against unemployment and poverty has been eroded by the severe economic difficulties experienced in several countries, which were brought about by the Asian crisis and related developments. The crisis in Asia provides a powerful illustration of the importance of an enabling environment for social development and of the need of having the right policies in place. It also provided a tremendous impulse for change. Indeed, the most striking contribution of the Asian crisis has been the emergence of an intense debate about what should constitute sound policy.

165. Concerns have been voiced that the dominance of macroeconomic targets and parameters over the social, political, cultural and environmental domains went too far. Governments and international financial institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the need to have a comprehensive approach to development, and are starting to translate this awareness into actions. It has been more forcefully recognized that social and economic policies and objectives must go together, and that they should serve all and not merely a privileged few in meeting their material and spiritual needs. These are significant developments. And if these seeds of change germinate and flourish, there is a greater chance

that the principles and goals agreed in March 1995 at Copenhagen will be fulfilled, and humanity will take a major step towards ridding the world of the scourges of poverty, unemployment and injustice.

Annex

Progress towards targets

1. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development adopted specific targets to meet basic needs for all. This annex reviews the level of current achievement in meeting some of those targets. In so doing, it draws heavily on the study prepared by the United Nations Population Division, in collaboration with other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, entitled "*Charting the progress of populations*",[a] and on the findings of the progress report prepared by UNICEF on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children.[b]

A. Education

Universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school children by the year 2000.

Closing the gender gap in primary and secondary enrolment rates by 2005.

Achievement of universal primary education by 2015.

2. According to the latest available data, progress has been made towards achieving these goals, but significant disparities remain. Of the 161 countries with available data, one third or 54 countries have a combined (male and female) primary and secondary gross enrolment ratio of 90 per cent or more, approaching the goal of universal access to education, and another third is in the 70–89 per cent range. One fifth or 32 countries, mostly in Africa, still have enrolment ratios less than 50 per cent. Progress achieved so far is not enough to reach universal access by the year 2000, except in East Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and the Baltic States and the developed market economies. In addition, 150 million children in developing countries who start school do not reach a minimum level of education (grade 5) before they drop out.[c] It is estimated that only 60 per cent of the South Asian and 67 per cent of sub-Saharan African children reach grade 5.

3. The size of the gender gap has been slow to change, with current estimates of gender disparities in primary school enrolment of 12 percentage points in South Asia, nine percentage points in the Middle East and North Africa, and six percentage points in sub-Saharan Africa. In about 40 per cent of countries worldwide, school enrolment ratios at the primary and secondary levels combined are higher for males than for females by more than five percentage points. In the more developed regions, the majority of countries (90 per cent) have gender gaps of less than five percentage points, while half of the countries in the developing regions have substantially higher enrolment ratios for boys than girls. Conversely, in Latin America and the Caribbean the gender gap is much more limited than in other developing regions, and in a substantial number of countries female enrolment is actually higher than male enrolment.

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[a] Population Division document ESA/P/WP.149 of 1 December 1998.

[b] UNICEF document E/ICEF/1998/8 of 18 March 1998.

[c] See UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1999*.

B. Adult illiteracy rate

Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate to at least half of its 1990 level, with an emphasis on female illiteracy.

4. It is estimated that the overall illiteracy rate has fallen to 23 per cent in 1995, and is estimated to drop to 20 per cent by the beginning of the next century. Nevertheless, it is estimated that about 885 million adults, almost two thirds of them women, are presently illiterate.

5. The distribution of illiterate adults remains uneven: virtually all live in developing countries, notably in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Illiteracy rates are relatively low in Latin America and the Caribbean, and higher in Africa. Only 4 per cent of Latin American and the Caribbean countries have adult illiteracy rates greater than 50 per cent, while 40 per cent of African countries do so. About one quarter of countries in Asia and Oceania have illiteracy rates of less than 10 per cent. Almost all developed countries have close to 100 per cent literacy rates. However, a recent study shows that at least a quarter of the adult population in OECD countries lacks the minimum level of literacy, failing to reach level three, which is needed to cope adequately with the demands of everyday life and work.[d]

6. There is a wide gender disparity in adult illiteracy rates in Africa. More than 60 per cent of countries in this region have female illiteracy rates that are higher than for males by 20 percentage points or more. Improvements in literacy rates have been noticed among younger age groups. About 30 per cent of the countries in Asia and the Pacific have a very wide gender gap of 20 points or more. In contrast, Latin America and the Caribbean have much smaller gaps.

C. Life expectancy

Life expectancy of not less than 60 years in any country by the year 2000.

7. Life expectancy at birth continues to increase in both developing and developed countries. Today, global average life expectancy is 65 years (63 years for males and 68 years for females). As of 1995–2000, about 70 per cent of countries have achieved the 2000 goal of a life expectancy of 60 years. All developed countries and all economies in transition of Eastern Europe and Central Asia have already met this target. Nonetheless, in several of the countries now forming the Commonwealth of Independent States, life expectancy levels observed in 1985–1990 could not be maintained as they deteriorated with the transition to the market system. Some countries are projected to regain their 1985–1990 level of life expectancy only by 2005–2010.

8. This situation is quite distinct in developing countries. In Africa, life expectancy is lower than 60 years in 41 out of 53 countries in 1995–2000. The majority of sub-Saharan countries (28 countries), on the basis of current assumptions, are expected to achieve a 60-year life expectancy only after 2020–2025. This dismal projection reflects the extent of the AIDS epidemic in the continent. In the nine hardest hit African countries (prevalence of 10 per cent or more), life expectancy at birth is currently 10 years shorter than it would have been in the absence of the disease.[e] On the other hand, in Latin America and the Caribbean all but one country has already met the goal of 60 years. Among the 57 developing countries

[d] See UNDP, *Human Development Report 1998* (New York, Oxford University Press).

[e] See United Nations, "World population estimates and projections: the 1998 revision", briefing packet, 28 October 1998.

of Asia and Oceania for which estimates are available, 49 have already achieved a life expectancy of 60 years.

D. Infant mortality and under-5 mortality rate

By the year 2000, countries are to reduce mortality rates of infants (under one year of age) and children under five years of age by one third of the 1990 level, or 50 to 70 per 1,000 live births respectively, whichever is less. By the year 2015, the infant mortality rates should be below 35 per 1,000 live births and the under-5 mortality rate below 45 per 1,000.

9. At the global level, 116 of 184 countries have infant mortality rates at or below 50 per 1,000 live births in 1995–2000. All developed and transition economies have already met the target set for 2015, that is, infant mortality rates at or below 35 per 1,000 live births. This compares with 38 per cent of developing countries. As in the case of the other social indicators presented above, developing countries present a very diversified record, with some regions more advanced than others in meeting this goal. Nearly 70 per cent of Latin American and Caribbean countries have met the 2015 target, while only 8 per cent of African countries have been able to do so. About 34 per cent of African countries still present considerably higher rates of infant mortality at or above 100 per 1,000 live births. The target established for the year 2000 (one third reduction or 50 per 1,000 births) is forecast to be met only sometime after 2010–2015 in 39 out of 52 countries in the region. Only 5 per cent of Asia and Pacific developing countries currently have infant mortality rates above 100. Asia and Pacific countries, however, are also off target. In the Asian countries, infant mortality remains above 50 per 1,000 live births in 30 per cent of the countries; in Latin America and the Caribbean, 10 per cent of the countries of the region have yet to meet this goal.

10. During the first half of the 1990s, infant mortality rates deteriorated in African countries experiencing civil or ethnic conflicts (Burundi, the Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia). It also increased in Albania, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Iraq. Moreover, such countries as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not expected to experience any progress in terms of lower infant mortality rates during the second half of the 1990s.

11. Under-five mortality rate (U5MR) continued to decline in the 1990s. However, UNICEF estimates that the majority of children live in countries that are not on track to achieve the global goal, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia account for 72 per cent of deaths of children under five years of age. Between 1990–1995, U5MR in sub-Saharan Africa declined by less than 1 per cent per year. It must decline by 19 per cent per year between 1995 and 2000 to reach the goal. In South Asia, the rate of reduction will have to accelerate from 2 to 11 per cent. Only one third of countries are on track in East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, CIS and the Baltic States. About half the countries in the Middle East and North Africa and more than two thirds of the developed countries must achieve a one-third reduction in U5MR.

E. Maternal mortality

By the year 2000, to reduce maternal mortality rate (MMR) by one half of the 1990 level.

12. It is estimated that there were approximately 585,000 maternal deaths in 1990, of which 99 per cent occurred in less developed countries. Another 50 million women live with a permanent injury or disability following pregnancy-related complications or delivery. At the global level, disparities across countries remain extremely wide. For instance, the risk of a woman dying from pregnancy-related causes is 1 in 50 in the developing countries and 1 in 10 in many countries of Africa. In developed countries, it can be as low as 1 in 9,000.

13. As of 1990, one fifth of countries had maternal mortality ratios of less than 30 per 100,000 births, all of them being developed and transition countries and a few developing countries in Asia and Oceania. No African country has MMR below 100, and in 45 per cent of the least developed countries this rate is higher than 1,000. The majority of countries in Latin American and the Caribbean have a ratio of less than 200. Maternal mortality data for the year 1995 have not yet become available.

F. Malnutrition, among children under 5 years of age

By the year 2000 to reduce severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five years of age by half of the 1990 level.

14. In 1995, about 174 million children under five years of age in the developing countries were malnourished. Malnutrition is estimated to contribute to more than 50 per cent of under-five deaths occurring in developing countries each year. Available data show that there has been some improvement in reducing child malnutrition at the global level, but the rate of improvement has decreased significantly in the 1990s compared to the 1980s. Estimates indicate a decline in the ratio of malnourished children from 34 per cent in 1985 to 31 per cent in 1990 and 29 per cent in 1995. The goal for the year 2000 is therefore 15 per cent. The rate of decline in child malnutrition observed so far has not been fast enough to achieve that target.

15. There are significant regional differences. Malnutrition is particularly acute in Asia and Oceania and the least developed countries, where at least 40 per cent of countries belonging to those groupings exhibited an underweight prevalence of 30 per cent or more during 1990–1996. The situation in Africa is relatively better, as only 23 per cent of African countries have underweight prevalence over 30 per cent. No country in Latin America and the Caribbean and the developed countries suffers from such high prevalence of malnutrition.

G. Improved access to safe water and sanitation

To provide on a sustainable basis, access to safe drinking water in sufficient quantities, and proper sanitation for all.

16. Access to safe water is improving. About 800 million more people can today count on safe water supplies than in 1990. The number of people with access to safe water increased from 2.5 billion to 3.3 billion, as most Governments and communities have placed a higher priority to this issue. From 1990 to the latest data available, the ratio of population with access to safe water has increased from 45 to 58 per cent in Africa, 61 to 73 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, and 79 to 84 per cent in West Asia, and stagnated at 78 per cent

in Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite this progress, large segments of the populations in these countries still live without access to safe water and sanitation, thus increasing their exposure to preventable water-borne diseases.

17. Access to sanitation is, in general, more limited than access to safe water. Among the 75 developing countries for which there is information available, in 42 of them less than 50 per cent of their populations had access to sanitation. The situation is particularly critical in the least developed countries and in Africa. Some progress, however, has been observed. Population covered has increased from 36 to 52 per cent in Africa, from 30 to 35 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific, from 65 to 68 per cent in West Asia, and from 69 to 71 per cent in the Americas and the Caribbean.

H. Malaria mortality and morbidity

Efforts should be strengthened to reduce malaria mortality and morbidity by the year 2000 by at least 20 per cent compared to 1995 levels in at least 75 per cent of affected countries.

18. Malaria currently affects 101 countries, which host 2.4 billion people, 40 per cent of the world population. More than 90 per cent of all malaria cases are in sub-Saharan Africa. More than one million deaths annually are estimated to be caused by the disease. Children are at a particularly high risk, especially those living in areas with poor access to health services. Other high-risk groups include pregnant women, refugees and displaced people.

19. Global action against malaria has been carried out within the framework of the Global Malaria Control Strategy sponsored by WHO and other organizations. Highest priority is given to sub-Saharan Africa. The Strategy aims to provide early diagnosis and treatment; implement preventive measures; detect epidemics; and strengthen local capacities. Most of the malaria-endemic African countries have completed national plans of action for malaria control. In addition, the newly independent States of Central Asia and the Caucasus have developed national plans to counter the resurgence of malaria in their countries. At the global level, more than 90 per cent of countries affected by the disease are implementing malaria control programmes, thus meeting established targets. In several countries, however, those plans are still at their initial stages of implementation, and financial support for malaria control has been far from adequate.

20. Most recently, there is a strong and growing commitment in support of actions against malaria. The new Director-General of WHO identified Roll Back Malaria (RBM) as one of the top priorities of the renewed WHO. RBM is aimed at reducing malaria, developing endemic countries' health systems and building new means of tackling global health concerns. The new initiative will build on current malaria efforts and the Global Malaria Control Strategy. RBM will focus first on Africa. This campaign represents a global partnership, drawn from malaria-affected countries, United Nations bodies, bilateral development agencies, development banks, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. On 30 October 1998, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank and WHO announced that the four agencies were launching RBM jointly and would cooperate in all aspects of its activities.